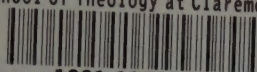


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BY

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

WHEN our Lord came to earth, many were waiting for the Kingdom of God. So clear-cut was their picture of the Kingdom that when it did come in another guise they did not recognise it. Once more men are waiting for the Kingdom of God. We have prayed for revival; and we can conceive no revival which does not express itself in repentance, faith, and prayer; and in a deepened loyalty to the organised associations for Christian worship and service.

But in the New Testament we read not only of the Christ but also of the Baptist. There were men who were not far from the Kingdom, yet who had been baptised only with John's baptism, who still lacked the quickening breath of Holy Spirit, did not even know of the existence of Holy Spirit.

Some months ago the writer attended a meeting held to discuss methods of helping the "depressed classes" of India. One of the speakers, a Hindu gentleman, after lauding the work that Christian missions have done for the depressed classes, went on to urge that missionaries should cease their efforts

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to win the higher castes. He gave the curious reason that the Brahmins of India will adopt Christianity though they will never call themselves Christians.

Does not that shed a light on much that is happening in the world to-day? Everywhere and in all departments of life, not least among working men, women, the coloured races and small nations, we are witnessing a revolt of the unprivileged classes against the privileged. In their essence the new movements are an insistent demand that the world shall accept Jesus' conception of the infinite significance of each human being. The toilers of our Western cities, as they climb their Pisgah, the teeming millions of the Orient as they dare to lift up their heads, seldom acknowledge the source of their inspiration, often are not themselves conscious of it; but we hear the voice of Jesus in their demand to be regarded as citizens in the great commonwealth of God.

Everyone who knows anything of the life of the Indian student of to-day must have marvelled at the response of educated young India to Christian ideals of social service. Jesus Christ never mastered the minds of men as He does to-day. It is better to follow Him, even though blindly and sullenly, than to say, "Lord, Lord," while refusing to do the things that He says. We are realising as we never realised before that the Christianising of men, of all men, in all their relations, is not so much a matter of

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interest to the Church as a matter of life or death for the world. We have need, in the light that Jesus gives us, to study God's working in the world around us, lest haply we be found fighting even against God.

In this volume the aim has been to convey, as far as possible in non-technical language, one's conception of some aspects of the message of Jesus for the moral and social life of the age. The book has been written under various difficulties, not the least of which was the loss of the results of much work by the torpedoing of the steamer in which I was coming home from India.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. McFadyen, the general editor of the series, for unremitting help in the preparation of the book, and for seeing the book through the press during my absence in France; also to my wife for correcting the proof-sheets.

I have made constant use of Dr. Moffatt's "Translation of the New Testament," but have not consciously adopted any of his renderings without separate acknowledgment. Quotations from the Psalms and from the Wisdom Books are given as in Dr. McFadyen's "The Psalms in Modern Speech" and "The Wisdom Books in Modern Speech."

J. F. MCFADYEN.

Greenock,

1st December, 1917.

CHAPTER I

Life as Jesus saw it

"JESUS and LIFE": the collocation of terms seems so natural that most of us have almost forgotten that a religion may have other ideals than life. Conceptions of the kind of life that Jesus came to bring vary from age to age; the tendency in our own generation is to give the word a far wider range than in the days of the supremacy of asceticism. But that the message of Jesus is a message for life is a Christian axiom.

We assume that the teaching of Jesus had reference in the first place to the state of things that had come within His own experience. Accordingly, before we ask what Jesus has to teach us about life, there is a prior question: What did Jesus know about life? To one who has spent one's life in the European quarter of an Indian city India may be an all but unknown country. And so we ask: Did Jesus know life, this life we have to live, in all its sordidness and pain as well as its goodness and gladness; and how did it all seem to Him?

Jesus was a doctor, albeit one who employed unusual methods. He knew of life what any doctor knows. He had seen much of repulsive diseases,

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had seen human beings writhing with pain while those who loved them had to stand by helpless. He knew too in how many cases disease is due to vice. Jesus was a religious teacher. He held private interviews with men and women who were dissatisfied with their lives, many of them no doubt with good reason; and even if they did not always tell their story frankly, the Gospels emphasise that He had in an unusual degree the power to read people's thoughts. He conducted a ministry to harlots. He knew how they came to be harlots and why the class is so large.

Jesus was not a lawyer, but on at least one occasion He was asked to decide a disputed inheritance; and there is abundant evidence that He had made a special study of the avarice that does so much to keep the lawyers busy. Perhaps to none of these professions would the politician yield the palm as an expert in human nature. Though Jesus Himself refused to enter the greasy arena of politics, He had no lack of opportunity for studying the aims and methods of masters of the science.

Many social circles knew Jesus, though He did not move much among the leaders of society: when He was presented to the High Priest, the King, the Governor, in each case it was in the capacity of a prisoner being tried on a capital charge. Yet He was no stranger in the homes of the rich. He knew the glamour of the big house where hospitality involves no fine calculation of resources, of the luxurious appointments, the arrangements for comfort, the

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surroundings where there is everything to please and nothing to offend the cultured taste. But for the most part we find Jesus amid other scenes. If we would follow Him we must be prepared to keep strange company, beggars, thieves, lepers, prostitutes, all kinds of impossible people. We have to learn not only to keep company with them but to admire them, to find them lovable, and harder still, to love them. We find ourselves expected to meet in a friendly way men and women who do not belong to our own caste, to cease to look at them as if we were looking at them from another planet, to cease to speak to them as if they were at the other end of a long-distance telephone. To follow Jesus will transform our social life. New faces will appear at our dinner tables, new friends will bid us welcome in their homes. As we step out from our social cage and come to know something of men and women, we cease to feel good because we have accepted the invitation to Levi's party, when we had the option of a reception at Simon's.

Jesus believed in the common meal as an opportunity for learning to know men and enabling men to know Him. We often see Him as guest. Only twice do we see Him as host, but when He entertained He entertained with royal hospitality: the meal on the grass by the lake-side where a few loaves and fish and the power of God satisfied five thousand weary and hungry followers, uninvited but welcome guests; the Supper in the upper room, the one feast to which guests of Jesus came by invitation, where the

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bread He gave them meant His body, and the cup His blood.

Our Lord knew people of all kinds, knew them intimately at their best and at their worst. He knew crime and lust and misery and pain. But we are almost more reassured by the fact that He knew life in its squalor, the unspeakable squalor of Oriental poverty and disease. When we have met an Indian begging leper, seen his loathsome sores, heard his raucous persistent cries ; when our whole soul has revolted and we have felt but one desire, to flee and shut the horrible thing out of our eyes, out of our ears, out of our memories—suddenly like an inspiration the thought has occurred to us : the beggars and the sick people of the Gospel stories we have always loved were just like that. We had always thought of them as clean beggars, romantic invalids. Here is the reality. The same hideous disfigurements that meet our eyes met His eyes ; the same hoarse maddening cries that fall on our ears fell on His ears. Jesus must have known that subtlest of all temptations—the suggestion that the whole life is so squalid that it is not worth considering, the feeling that even God cannot take much account of such human wreckage.

Man's inhumanity to man was no sealed book to Jesus. He had seen the extortion of the tax-gatherers, the methods by which the priests beggared widows. He knew of the robbers that lay in wait for travellers, of money-lenders who tortured their debtors by every artifice of the law till they had paid the last farthing of their debt. He was aware that justice is some-

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times administered by judges who have no fear of God or man. He had heard of Pilate slaying Galilean worshippers as they offered their sacrifices. He had seen the caste system at work in a form, less elaborate perhaps, but hardly less virulent, than that which obtains in modern India. He had heard educated men indignantly protesting when He had relieved a man in pain or a woman in distress, because the healing act happened to be a technical infringement of a traditional rider to a ceremonial law. Every day He saw the hungry sheep looking up, and the shepherds, instead of feeding them, donned vestments and struck attitudes and called on the sheep to admire them. Jesus had seen the greatest prophet of all time lose his head because he had called a woman's sin by the name by which God calls it. And He knew the murder in the hearts of the priests whose claims and whose lives He was bringing under the pitiless light of reality.

Jesus had experience too of the mystery of suffering for which no human being is responsible. He knew that this is a world in which a widow may lose her only son, in which a tower may fall and crush its victims in indiscriminate slaughter; a world in which winds may blow, storms beat, and floods be let loose, to overthrow all human structures that are not founded on a rock. Jesus had read history too, at least the chequered history of His own people, with its record of slavery, and famine, and pestilence, ambitious rulers, cruel and greedy rich men, bloody fighting, disastrous defeat, and exile.

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How did all this appeal to Jesus? With His knowledge of life and men, was He still an optimist? Like most questions that are worth asking about Jesus, this question cannot be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No." It is easy to effervesce about the joy and the glory of life, to find poetry and romance in life's most tragic or sordid phases. But Jesus saw the tragic in all its tragedy, the sordid in all its sordidness. His optimism did not consist in throwing a silk coverlet over a muck-heap.

Jesus was a realist. But He would not have acknowledged as realism any view of the world that regards it as a combination of a gaol, a hospital, and a house of ill-fame. He saw the facts; but He saw *all* the facts. The pessimist concentrates his attention on the birds that die of hunger and cold. Jesus says:—"Look at the myriads of birds that your Father feeds." The pessimist is so obsessed by the towers that fall that he forgets the vastly greater number of towers that remain erect. If there are in the world widows weeping for their only sons, there are also Peters shedding tears of remorse because it has been brought home to them that their sin is a sin against immortal love, and there are Magdalenes whose tears are not tears of grief but of repentance and new hope.

The daily work of Jesus brought Him into an atmosphere of weakness and pain, brought Him into the closest contact with the blind and the deaf, lepers and demoniacs; and Jesus could never see pain without feeling it; yet He never forgot that most

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men are neither blind nor deaf, neither insane nor lepers. In spite of the multitude of His patients it is not the hospital atmosphere we breathe in the Gospel story, but the free air of hill and sea.

Jesus realised too that the Pharisees, Herod, and Pilate, did not make up human kind. There were Simeons and Annas in Jerusalem as well as scribes ; there was a Nicodemus among the Pharisees and a Joseph of Arimathæa in the Sanhedrin. The bitterness with which the Gospel writers speak of Judas is a reflection of Jesus' own judgment of his crime ; but the betrayal by Judas was never suffered to obscure the loyalty of the eleven. If there are robbers who lie in wait for lonely travellers, there are good Samaritans ready to risk their own lives in helping them. The creditor who gets his insolvent debtor by the throat may be a common type, but he is not the only type of creditor ; and there are kindly masters who will give their workmen more than their legal due.

Jesus was an optimist in this sense, that much of the pain in the world He viewed as temporary and remediable. If there is blindness, it can be cured ; if there is leprosy, it can be cleansed. The poor we have always with us, but we need not have them with us if only men were kinder. It is not difficult for a doctor or even a clergyman who does his work in a professional spirit to face daily the scenes that Jesus faced and still preserve a bright outlook on life. But those who lift burdens by sharing them will exhaust mind and heart as well as body. This

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was our Lord's method ; yet never once does He wonder whether it is "worth while." Once, in the story of the epileptic boy, Jesus expresses impatience : " Faithless generation, how long shall I be with you ? How long shall I bear with you ? " ¹ The exception proves the rule, since He is impatient, not at the boy's agony or the father's distress, but at the faithlessness that will not take advantage of the rivers of God's grace flowing freely for those who will avail themselves of them.

We wish to know especially what Jesus thought of life as a whole. Are the deeds of kindness to which He calls us but the work of the stretcher-bearers after Armageddon ; or has He a heart to believe and to bid us believe that there is love in the universe that will reveal itself more and more till it has conquered all ? Is this old earth of ours a derelict ship, or in spite of the darkness and the lowering storms can we hear the reassuring cry of the sailor on the watch :—" All's well ; lights burning brightly." ?

¹ Mark 9¹⁹.

CHAPTER II

Why are You Afraid Like This ?¹

THAT question represents Jesus' attitude to the most disconcerting facts in life. It is not only that He Himself never feels fear. He can hardly understand it in others, at least in those who profess to have faith in God. The fearlessness of Jesus was not due, as courage so often is, to temperament. One whose pity overflowed so readily and so generously into fatiguing action must have had a nature sensitive beyond our conception. The sense of shame that made Jesus stoop and write on the ground in presence of the adulteress and her shameless and lascivious accusers reminds us that His soul must often have quivered with a sense of outrage at things the people around Him regarded as all in the day's work.

Nor was Jesus' untroubled outlook on life the natural attitude of one who has escaped those experiences that shake the faith and break the will. Forces material and spiritual conspire to thwart Him in His work and turn Him from the path that God has set before Him. The waters of the Sea of Galilee threaten to engulf Him and bring His work

¹ Mark 4th. Dr. Moffatt's translation.

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to a premature close. His fellow-townsmen try to hurl Him over a cliff. The ceremonialists plot against His life and at last plot successfully. He is betrayed with a kiss. All this was only wrestling against visible foes. But Jesus knew that the enemy with power is the enemy within. It was out of the fullness of His own experience that He pictured the narrowness of the road that leads to Life, the difficulty of finding it. Throughout His ministry He had to struggle against the temptation to take the popular and easy course ; the sting of the temptation lying in this, that the easy course could so speciously be represented as the path of righteousness : for was it not the road that ensured the safety of God's Son, the sure and speedy triumph of God's kingdom ?

Jesus' fearlessness in the face of what we call the evils of life is not a triumph over fear. He sees nothing to be afraid of. God is His Father. The Kingdom which those whom His Father blesses are to inherit has been prepared from the foundation of the world. His Father's plans cannot go awry. Everything that happens, most of all the plans laid for His destruction, happen " as it is written " ; happen as even long ago the insight of men in tune with God's will had shown them God's plans must work themselves out. Jesus wants us too to think of God in this way. He asks us to have no thought of God that is not a filial thought.

And so Jesus dispels the biggest fear of all, what we might call fear of the universe, the fear that the

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world is a rudderless ship, that there is no God, only remorseless law ; the fear that God, if there is a God, has set the world a-spinning and now takes His rest, heedless of the groans of those who have been maimed by the machinery He has set in motion ; the fear that the spirits who rule the universe, if there are such spirits, are malicious beings who delight to hurt us. Jesus does not reason about any of these views of the world. He ignores them. He knew as none of us can know the dark experiences that drive men to these wild expedients of thought. But the pure in heart see God. They see Him everywhere and they see Him as He is. Jesus had no need to argue or to fight down doubts. He had no doubts to fight down. As the child of affectionate parents never doubts their love whatever may happen, never reasons about it or seeks to prove it, so Jesus has a conviction that nothing can shake, that God is His Father and that all is well. Or rather, it is not a conviction, it is knowledge. One of His favourite maxims was that if we would learn of God and the things of God we must cultivate the child spirit. This also is from His own experience. His knowledge of God was not the student's knowledge but the Son's.

Even if the world is our Father's world, may there not be in it evil spirits with both the will and the power to hurt us ? One of the reasons that Christianity has lost something of its appeal is just that it has done its work so well. We have forgotten the pit from which we were dug. We know only as a

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piece of curious information that there were and are millions of people whose world is peopled with malignant powers that only wait their opportunity to work their will on them. Jesus attached enormous importance to His campaign against the demons, and the power to cast them out was an essential part of the equipment of the apostles. Was Jesus right in giving Satan an independent personality and in picturing the world as full of malignant demons? Are there, as Jesus and the Gospels represent, legions of angels always ready to come to the help of the pious in distress? We are no fit judges. Our eyes are so bleared with factory smoke, our ears so dulled by the rattle of machinery, our souls so starved with our quest for money and gaiety, that the sights and sounds of the spiritual world are not for us.

One of the paradoxes of the history of thought is that the age of machines, every one of which in their origin, their construction, and their daily operation, bore testimony to intellect, and will, and a whole spiritual world, for a time nearly drove the spiritual world from the thoughts of educated men; and even yet we have only partially recovered it. We must wait awhile before we know whether we Sadducees or Jesus and His followers were right in this matter of angels and spirits. And we wait without fear; for Jesus has abundantly proved to us that, if there are demons, they are demons under control, and if there are angels, they are God's angels.

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After all, the question is chiefly of sentimental interest. We may strongly suspect that some of the angels of which we read in the New Testament were angels of flesh and blood, as are most of the angels with which we ourselves have any dealings. And whether there are discarnate fiends, there are beyond a doubt incarnate fiends. Even to Jesus, Satan was not always an incorporeal existence, but might take the form of a loved apostle. Men are God's children, but some of them have left the Home and gone abroad because they would not keep the Father's rules. Have the children of the Home nothing to fear from those who have left the Home because they were of a different spirit ? There is nothing to be gained by underestimating what men can do to us. Men can do to us very terrible things. They can cause us physical pain, even torture. They can rob us of our goods, injure us in our work or in our prospects, take from us our good name. They can cause us mental anguish. Do we not well to be afraid of them ?

"No !" says Jesus. "Their power is very limited. They can only kill the body." "*Only* kill the body," we say. "Is not that the most terrible of all things ?" Not in the judgment of Jesus ; not if we are living the filial life. He speaks of death as a somewhat unimportant incident in a man's career. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that," after that trifle, "are helpless to do anything further."† Our enemies

† Luke 12¹.

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can cause us pain, horrible pain ; but their work is all external. They cannot injure us in our manhood and womanhood. And once more was not Jesus thinking of Himself? The Pharisees could kill the body of Jesus. Jesus Himself they could not reach.

We note then a point that in all our reasonings on the subject we readily forget. We are for the most part interested mainly in the welfare of our bodies. "A prosperous business man" does not mean a man who manages to conduct his business without wronging his neighbour. When a woman has "made a good match" it is not safe to infer that her husband is rich in faith and hope and love. It would be untrue to suggest that when our Jobs contend with God, their chief grievance is the loss of their oxen and asses, their sheep and camels ; but we do them no injustice in attributing to such a source no inconsiderable part of their problem. Job was a healthy and a rich man when the Satan was allowed to test him, rich in material possessions and in human love. It was the abundance of his wealth, material and spiritual, that made his trial possible. His view of the relation of the soul to the material environment was that both should prosper together. He had to learn that while this is so ultimately, it is so only ultimately ; and in the meantime spiritual welfare may be consistent with material poverty and much pain. With Jesus pusillanimity, narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness, is one of the deadly sins. Thinking

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of ourselves and forgetting others, considering the bodily and the material and neglecting the unseen things that abide, remembering the present and ignoring the limitless future, that is what leads astray.

But, after all, if we have in any way caught the spirit of Jesus, our worst fears are not for ourselves at all, but for the terrible things that may happen to those we love. What of the parents in an invaded country who have to stand by while their children are tortured and their daughters ravished? Has Jesus any message for them? And we think again and ask ourselves: Is it quite true that our enemies can never get down to our manhood and our womanhood, cannot make us worse men and women? Are there no circumstances in which we cannot say, "We are still masters of our souls"? What of the white slave traffic, aye and the black and the brown slave traffic though we do not hear so much about it, where the souls as well as the bodies of our sisters are destroyed in hell? And is there no such thing as tyranny that treats men like brute beasts until they become something not very unlike brute beasts? Jesus' faith was never the faith of want of knowledge or want of thought. He had seen it all. Before the body of Jesus bled on Calvary His heart had bled for all the wrong and the pain that are in the world. He felt it as only the pure can feel it. Better, He said, be drowned in the deepest sea than be guilty of

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leading one of God's humble ones astray. And if God does not forget those who lead them astray, we may be quite sure He does not forget the victims themselves. Their cries by day and by night are in the ears of God.

There is one more source of fear. What of nature? What of fire and flood, storm and earthquake, famine and pestilence? To Jesus the sun is God's sun and the rain is God's rain.¹ Does He know that God's sun, if untempered by God's rain, causes famine which in a single country in a single year sweeps off the people by the hundred thousand? What has He to say to plague, which in India in recent years has counted its victims by the myriad, which takes with impartial hand the old and the young, the weakly and the strong, and sits for months together like a brooding terror on the hearts of the people? Jesus had studied the Bible. He knew all we can know of "natural calamities." Old Testament saints had wrestled with their doubts. If Jesus had ever to justify to Himself God's dealings with men, there is no trace of it in the Gospels.

Christian apologists write books to prove that God is good in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Christian philosophers try to make things simpler by telling us that the laws of nature are non-moral. Jesus calls on the forces of nature to witness that God is not only good but kind, kind far above our deserving. Some find it hard to believe in God because the flood rots the crop of the pious farmer as well as of

¹ Matt. 5:45.

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his immoral neighbour. "Look," says Jesus, "how good God is. The sun is God's sun; yet He lets it shine on the bad man's field just as much as on the good man's. That is how God treats His enemies."¹ The pessimist is grieved because in times of drought nature does not discriminate between the religious farmer and the irreligious. "Look," says Jesus, "how kind God is. God sends rain as plentifully on the fields of the unjust farmer who fights against Him as of the just who is His friend."² Jesus knows about the sparrows that starve in the winter as well as of those that God feeds. He asks us to believe that the heart of God is as tender as our own. These little birds are sold in the bazaar at two for a half-penny, yet our Father is with each one of them when they die.³ If the Father whom Jesus has revealed is with them, that is enough.

We have one episode that lights up for us the mind of Jesus on this subject of the forces of nature that seem so often to be an independent power in the universe. One evening as Jesus and His disciples cross the sea of Galilee a storm arises. Winds are roaring, seas raging, the sailors' hearts failing them for fear. Jesus sleeps through it all, through the tumult and excitement and terror. Volumes could not expound more fully His philosophy of nature. The sleepers of Gospel story preach to us: Peter and James and John who slept while Judas was working and while Jesus would have had them pray; the five thoughtless servant girls who slept off their

¹ Matt. 5:45.

² Matt. 10:29.

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guard, unready for the awakening, as they waited for the bride and bridegroom. Even Jesus seldom preached a more effective sermon than when He slept through the storm. He knows that while He sleeps His Father watches. God is at the helm. The sailors' lives are in no jeopardy. He wonders that the disciples do not see this. In Mark's graphic account Jesus says to wind and sea, "Hush. Be muzzled."¹ But there is no indication that He felt safer or thought the disciples should feel safer after the storm ceased than before.

Jesus rebuked them for their want of faith. What was the faith that He expected from them? Surely not the belief that the boat in which He was could not sink. Jesus' difficulty was not to convince the disciples that He was immortal but to persuade them that His pathway lay through death. The "life" He promised them was not longevity of the body but vitality of the soul. But Jesus' work was not yet done. The education of the disciples was not yet complete. Until He can say "It is finished," it is true to say "no waters can swallow the ship" where He lies. To Jesus no language is too strong to convey His assurance of the unceasing loving control of His Father and ours in the humblest events of our daily lives. "As for you the hairs of your head are numbered, every one of them."² Everything that happens to Jesus, even the things that cause Him anguish, happen "as it is written;" if not in Old Testament Scripture, written at least

¹ Mark 4:39.

² Matt. 10:30.

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in the mind of God. We believe that God is light, on the whole. Until we can add that "darkness in Him there is none" we shall never see life as Jesus saw it or face life as He faced it. Not a soldier falls to the ground without our Father; not a bullet or a shell finds its mark but God sees and knows and loves and lets it be so. Woe to them through whom these things happen, but they all happen "as it is written."

Someone will say : There is no argument here ; this great Gospel rests on the simple word of Jesus ; we have still to settle the question who Jesus was. When He said to the first apostles "Follow Me," they rose and followed Him. Why they followed Him we do not know ; probably they themselves could not have told. There was that in Jesus that so wrought in them that when He said "Come" they could not help coming. And there is that in Jesus which so moves us that when He says to us "God is good," we know in our hearts that God is good. On any question within the range of the sciences we shall turn to our books and the teachers in the schools. On the big questions of life we go to the greatest personality we know. When we wish to know about God we go to the pure in heart.

Is there no place for chance in the world as Jesus sees it ? Once a man had an unfortunate experience on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. As he lay on the road half-dead, "by chance"† a certain priest came down that road. The wounded traveller

† Luke 103¹.

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did not know the priest was coming. The priest did not know he would see the wounded traveller. But God knew. God had arranged the meeting. He was giving the priest an opportunity to do a kindness and incidentally to make himself immortal. Chance is our ignorance of God's arrangements.

CHAPTER III

Strangers, but not Pilgrims

JESUS is sure that for the man whose life is in tune with the world there is nothing to be afraid of. But there are men in plenty whose lives are not in tune with the world ; and it is one of the paradoxes of Jesus' teaching that the men we call worldly are the men whose whole lives are a warfare against the very constitution of the world. The man who does not live his life in the spirit of Him through whom the world was made is a stranger on the face of the earth. The younger son of the parable¹ is commonly taken to represent the sensualist : and it would be a poor triumph of exegesis to rob the story of a meaning that has brought life and hope to countless weary wanderers. But the interpretation at least is narrow. If the story is a parable, why should we render so literally the swine, the pods, and the harlots ? It is a story of a son with an unfilial spirit, who was not at home in his father's house. He was interested only in himself—" Give me—" and in his own aggrandisement, his own rights as a son—" the share of the estate that is my due." He recognises no claim on him to be about his father's

¹ Luke 15¹¹⁻³².

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business ; his father exists for him, not he for his father. For all who live their lives in this spirit, there is but one end : famine, friendlessness, and the swine trough. Be they publicans or Pharisees, gaol-birds or office bearers in a church, they have turned their back on their Father's house ; they are strangers in a strange land, and the world is against them. "*Father*, give me my share of the estate." "*Father*, I have sinned." One of the points of the story is the transformed accent of the word Father. The first "*Father*" is a word of rote ; the son is a son according to the flesh, but he has not at heart the honour of the home. The second "*Father*" has a meaning on the son's lips it had never had before. He asks now not for property but for service, service in any capacity if only he be allowed to serve.

What becomes of those sons of the Father who till the end refuse to think of themselves as children, who spend their lives demanding what life can give and have not the word "service" in all their vocabulary ? Is not this a serious state of matters ? The story of the elder brother has often been treated as if it were for all practical purposes a new parable. Surely this is to misread it. The younger son has had his gay time in the far country ; and when times change for the worse all he has to do is to make for home, where he will be received with open arms and every mark of distinction, with never a word of the shameful past. We do not find it so in life. The conversation between the father and the elder brother is not a superfluous addition to the story but a second

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and integral chapter. The elder brother wants to know, as we all want to know, whether after all the younger son has had the best of it. And the Father says, "No." The prodigal returns indeed, but he does not return as he went. His share of the paternal estate, youth, health, reputation, purity, all are gone; and he has a new inheritance of a load of bitter memories. Long weary years of patient uphill work will not bring him back to a position quite like that which he destroyed in a few reckless months.

What of the elder brother who all the time has chosen the quiet and often dreary path of duty and service? "Son, you are with me all the time, and all that is mine is yours." Is this the language of rebuke? And why the extravagant rejoicing over the son who came back from abroad? For this reason, that when all hope had been given up, he has come back. Everything else has been lost, but he has saved his *life*; and the Father's transports of joy are the measure of the difference between life, shorn of everything but life, and the death in which he had pictured his son. This is Jesus' estimate of the perils of a child of God refusing to think of himself as a child of God and trying to live a selfish and secular life in the Father's world. Many would simply refuse to acknowledge that selfishness is so tragic a business as all this. May it be that the measure in which we differ from Jesus here is the measure of our inability to judge? The dead are fit for nothing but to bury their dead. They cannot tell who are living or what life is.

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The unfilial unbrotherly spirit may take many forms. Against which of them should we be most on our guard? Here again Jesus is at variance with most of us. In our practical code the offences that count are those which place us in the criminal dock, or lead to social ostracism: theft and cheating, unless they are kept within well defined limits; excess in drink, unless confined to appropriate places and seasons; sexual irregularity beyond the bounds recognised by society. But Jesus found no more fruitful soil for His ministry than among the professional cheats and harlots of the time. And perhaps nothing in the whole Gospel story so brings home to us the need of searching our consciences as the realisation of the kind of things that did Jesus to death. The deliberate teaching of the Gospels is that when God incarnate enters the world there are classes of people whose sole relation to Him is one of unmeasured hostility, who will never rest till they have driven Him from the world. The sins that brought Jesus to the cross were not the things that shock us but sins that are compatible with a distinguished position in the world of philanthropy and high office in the Church; may we not even say, sins that flourish best in an ecclesiastical atmosphere? If we are ever tempted to feel spiritually secure because our creed and our performance of Churchly duties are unimpeachable, it gives us pause to remember that it was the praying, temple-loving, Bible-reading, tithe-giving, Sabbath-keeping, ultra-orthodox representatives of a highly spiritual

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religion that stooped to bribery and treachery and did not scruple to invoke the aid of a political power they affected to hate and despise, in order to compass the death of Jesus Christ.

Pilate had the instincts of a just judge, but he vacillated and may have had his own reasons for avoiding an unpopular course. Weakness and love of popularity are not always the venial things we think them. Judas was perhaps a disappointed politician and Herod a time-server. But the murder of Jesus was due primarily neither to Pilate nor to Judas nor to Herod but to the Pharisees. One outstanding lesson of the life of Jesus is that the spirit of religion has no greater enemy than a perverted devotion to the forms of religion. The evangelists have shown us with much elaboration the things in Jesus that roused Pharisaic antipathy. They expected and wanted a Messiah, but the only Messiah they would acknowledge would be a magnified Pharisee who would share all their prejudices and lead them to earthly glory. Jesus had no authority: He had no kind of ordination that they could recognise. He had disgraced their order: He not only preached to tax-gatherers and non-templegoers—there might be no great harm in that—but He had no sense of dignity and sat among them at their disreputable junketings. His provincial accent was only part of His general want of style. He insisted too on finding a meaning in religious ceremonies—always a dangerous innovation—and attached no importance to the ceremony except in so far as it

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had a meaning for Him. He cared nothing for the will to power, and was willing to sit down under the Roman yoke. Not only did He refuse to accept them at their own valuation, but He did not trouble even to find euphemisms for their greed and cruelty, their petty vanity and hypocrisy. He refused to believe that the past was necessarily wiser and more experienced than the present. In solving moral problems He would have them look rather to the spirit of the creative personalities of the past, "what David did" for example, than to the hair-splitting of lawyers or theological professors.

We do not forget that the Church of our day is a Christian Church and that the Church which crucified Jesus was a Jewish Church. Yet the "sinners" of Jesus' day were just the non-church-goers of our day. If those outside church circles are not being drawn to Him as the "sinners" were drawn to Him; may it be that they do not see Him as the "sinners" saw Him? And if they do not, who is responsible? If the spirit of the Pharisee is alive in Christendom, we may be certain that its results are no less paralysing to religion, no less hostile to Jesus, than they were in His day. If we would examine our own relation to this most insidious and destructive of all sins, the Gospel story suggests certain questions that we can ask ourselves. Are we fond of talking about our religious activities? Jesus compared pious Jews striving to keep the law, to bullocks struggling and

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stumbling under a crushing load¹: would this comparison be applicable to the ideal Christian of our conception? Do we claim pecuniary gain or social recognition on the strength of our religious profession? In our self-examination do we ever adopt the method of comparing ourselves with others, and does the comparison ever lead to pride and contempt? Have we lists of virtues on which we pride ourselves, and among these do we give a high place to fulfilment of the Church's claims on us? Do we draw external and material distinctions between those inside the pale and those outside? Could our religious life be fairly described as a full-dress parade? Do we ever take an unfair advantage of men's reverence for piety, and the fact that they can see only the outward signs of piety? When we pray or give or practise any kind of self-sacrifice do we shut the door or do we open the door? Are we ever guilty of proselytising, trying rather to win converts to our tenets than to turn souls from darkness to Jesus? Are we convinced that outside of our order God has few favourites?

Jesus died a victim to sin, to many sins, to all sin; but pre-eminently and in the first place to the Pharisaic type of mind. This is the answer to the broad-mindedness that assures us we are all seeking the same end by different roads. The Pharisees of our day do not put their victims on crosses, not on wooden crosses at least; but is the spirit essentially different?

¹ Matt. 11²⁸.

CHAPTER IV

The Strain of Christianity

JESUS vehemently denounced Pharisees as a class; seldom, so far as our records go, the individual Pharisee. In the Gospel story we learn, as we learn in life, to distinguish between a system and the individuals in whom it is embodied. It is natural that men who have been brought up in the atmosphere of traditionalism and ceremonialism should become traditionalists: natural but not inevitable. The fault of the individual Pharisee is just that he does not rise above his environment. We are sometimes told that morality consists in the formation of good habits. But we must be sure that they are *good* habits. In Jesus' view conventionality is the deadly foe of goodness. Some measure of originality is essential to salvation. And here again Jesus runs counter to all our preconceived opinions in the place He gives to mere want of thought among instruments of destruction.

The road that leads to disaster is so obvious, so inviting, so well advertised, so extensively patronised by people who ought to know, that some have gone a long way on the broad road almost before they know there is an alternative pathway. The decisions

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that lead to life or to destruction seem often such trivial matters. Here are five girls waiting to take their place in a bridal procession.¹ The bride and bridegroom are delayed and the five go to sleep. No doubt it was very foolish of them. They ought to have foreseen the possibility of delay, and either have blown out their lamps or gone for more oil. But as they lay down heedlessly, no thought was farther from their minds than that they were making a choice between presence at and absence from the wedding festivities. As Dives² went out for his morning walk, no doubt he should sometimes have said a kind word to Lazarus or ordered a meal for him from the kitchen. At least he did Lazarus no harm ; probably he thought of him as an institution or as part of the landscape. But that this heedlessness should make all the difference between Abraham's bosom and the tortures of Hades, this is what arrests us.

Individual Pharisees lived according to their light and the standard expected from them by their society ; but in their case we know where acceptance of the current code was leading them. Life corroborates the teaching of Jesus that want of moral insight is not the venial thing we think it. If only evil were altogether and manifestly evil ! Why, we ask, should wisdom and even experience be necessary to penetrate its disguises ? But there is an insight that comes neither of wisdom nor experience. The pure in heart shall see God, and

¹ Matt. 25¹⁻¹³.

² Luke 16¹⁹⁻³¹.

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they shall be quick to know Satan too, though he come as he came to Jesus with Scripture texts on his lips. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind. The Pharisee looked at the tax-gatherer and saw a disloyal cheat; at the woman of the city and saw a harlot; at the coin the widow dropped into the treasury and saw a farthing. He looked at Jesus and saw an agent of Beelzebub. But the men and women who were in close touch with Jesus were learning to look at life with the eyes of God.

Life as Jesus saw it was a serious business, to be taken lightly at our peril; and so we find throughout the Gospels an atmosphere of earnestness, of eager haste. The young man *running*¹ to Jesus to ask Him how to get eternal life is an emblematic figure. Shepherds hasten to Bethlehem to see the new-born Messiah.² The thousands whom Jesus fed had reached the spot running.³ After the miracle when Jesus reached Gennesaret there was strenuous haste through a whole district as the people brought their sick friends to Jesus.⁴ Zacchaeus runs on in front of the crowd and climbs a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus⁵; and on the resurrection morning there is much running to and fro—Mary running to tell Peter and the other disciples of the empty tomb, Peter and the other running to the tomb to see for themselves.⁶

Jesus loved the runners of the Gospel story; and He loved too men and women of grit and determina-

¹ Mark 10¹⁷.

² Luke 2¹⁶.

³ Mark 633.

⁴ Mark 655.

⁵ Luke 194.

⁶ John 20^{2,4}.

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tion, people who knew exactly what they wanted and would let no obstacle stand in their way. The four men who brought their paralysed friend to Jesus only to find that the house where He was was crowded to the door, and who, instead of turning back as weaker men would have done, said at once :—
“ Well, if we cannot get in by the door we will get in by the roof ; ”¹ Bartimaeus who would not be quiet, and who when at last Jesus called him, threw off his cloak and sprang up and went to Jesus with his magnificent demand,² the Syro-phœnician who in her love for her suffering child would take no refusal however apparently contemptuous, but with no thought of her own feelings used her woman's wit and clung to her hope³ : these were dear to the heart of Jesus. Were they not dear to Him just because they were men and women after His own heart ? Jesus could not have conquered without this same grim determination and unshakeable faith. He would not let the rich young ruler call Him good.⁴ For in the world His goodness was goodness militant. His temptations, unlike His disciples, continued with Him till the end.

Not only earnestness but even recklessness always made its appeal to Jesus. When the woman at Bethany broke the flask of costly ointment and poured it over His head,⁵ the economical disciples, whose hard life had taught them how much can be done with fifteen pounds, grumbled, and were quite

¹ Mark 23.

² Mark 10⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰.

³ Mark 7²⁴⁻³⁰.

⁴ Mark 10¹⁸.

⁵ Mark 14³⁻⁹.

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sure that Jesus was with them in their protest. But Jesus always does the surprising thing; He approved the extravagance. The woman was anointing Him for His burial, not, as the disciples thought; with her ointment but with her love. To stop the outflow of such generous devotion would be to inflict a wrong on her, a wrong on Himself, that no amount of mechanical kindness to the perennial poor would ever outweigh.

Jesus is fond of the word *all*,—giving all, leaving all. There is a splendid abandon about the heroes and heroines of Gospel story. The pearl merchant who thought it a good bargain to sell every pearl he had to buy one,¹ the farm labourer who sold all his worldly possessions to buy the field with the hid treasure,² the widow who threw her last half-penny into the temple treasury, these are not the people we would send out as leaders of a thrift campaign. The cautious servant who took such good care of his one talent did not find his master grateful for his refusal to take risks.³ Prudence, a wise economy in the use of money, may be a virtue; it is a virtue to which Jesus did not think it necessary to call attention, though He said so much about money. He placed the spendthrift instinct high among the Christian graces; but the extravagance of the Christian prodigal is never an extravagance of self-indulgence, always of selfless love and devotion.

These men and women were convinced that their sacrifices, their giving and their selling, reckless as

¹ Matt. 1345,46.

² Matt. 1344.

³ Matt. 2524ff.

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they seemed, were only a great venture of faith, or rather they were not a venture at all ; they were certainties of faith. What they did was worth while. It is with hesitation we use the word "reward" in connection with Christian conduct. Have not our moralists told us that to be good for the sake of reward is but to be "other-worldly," which is hardly an advance on being "this-worldly." This is very clever ; but if we err in doubting its truth, we err in good company. Not once but again and again throughout the New Testament not least on the lips of our Lord, do we find this thought that the good life is also the wise life—if you like, even the prudent life.

Jesus promised the rich ruler "treasure in heaven" in return for the earthly treasure he was invited to abandon.¹ What is this treasure in heaven? Is it not simply spiritual treasure, the joy of sacrifice and service, of a talent worthily used, of the gratitude of the poor, of humility and kindness supplanting arrogance and selfishness? This joy none can take from us. Those who have been separated from their family for Jesus' sake, He has assured of entrance into a larger family, the bond among whom is devotion to Himself.² Is this an appeal to an unworthy instinct? Paul's reward for preaching to the Corinthians free of charge was that he could "refrain from insisting on all" his "rights as a preacher of the Gospel."³ James tells us that the reward

¹ Mark 10²¹.

² Mark 10^{29f}.

³ 1 Cor. 9¹⁸. Dr. Moffatt's translation.

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for turning back a wanderer is the consciousness that one has saved a soul from death and covered a multitude of sins.¹ That is why we are not afraid to speak of rewards. None but pure heroic souls feel the spell of the Gospel prizes. When men tell us that we should do the right just because it is right and "in the scorn of consequence," the answer is that there is no such thing as doing right in the scorn of consequence. The web of life is shot through and through with the justice of God. Right *will* bring its consequences; to ignore which is not superior morality but lack of insight. When Jesus assures us that goodness is profitable, His meaning is that the world is built on Christian lines; and if we do the will of God as revealed in Jesus, we are in unison with the world which ultimately is on our side.

Since Jesus reckons life a business of deadly earnest in which the issues are life and death and multitudes miss the way, we do not expect to find much of the lighter side of life in the Gospel story. There is no tale of human love in the Gospels, though there is one story of lust. Of home life there is hardly a glimpse. Is there humour in the Gospels? Some would have us see Jesus walking through Palestine with a smile on His face always ready with a kindly jest to hide His more serious meaning. Let those read the Gospels in this way who can. It may be that our Lord's reference to the coin in the mouth of the fish² is a playful way of suggesting to Peter that

¹ James 5^{19f}.

² Matt. 17²⁷.

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the attitude of passive resistance to the temple-tax is hardly worth while, since it is so easy to raise the amount by catching and selling a fish. When He reminded the Syro-phœnician woman that it was not proper to throw the children's bread to the dogs,* His expression of countenance may have made it clear that He was playfully adopting the bitter phrase which repelled Him as much as it repelled her.

We do not expect to find much gaiety in the humour of the Gospels, and perhaps more characteristic is the grim jest about the camel and the needle's eye. If the camel is ever to get through the needle's eye, it must somehow get rid of its hump, and if the rich man is to get through the door of the Kingdom of God he must somehow get rid of the hump on *his* back.² It is congruent with the whole story that when we come to the richest piece of humour in the Gospels Jesus is not the author but the victim. "They struck Him, saying:—'Prophecy for us, Messiah. Which of us was it that struck you?'"³ "They took off His clothes and dressed Him in a scarlet cloak; then they plaited a garland of thorns and put it on His head and a reed in His right hand; then they knelt in front of Him and made fun of Him by saying: "All hail! King of the Jews."⁴ Throughout the whole story of the trial and the crucifixion we hear the laughter of Him whose throne is in heaven, as each new indignity becomes another jewel for His crown.

* Mark 7²⁷.

² Mark 10²⁵.

³ Matt. 26^{67f}.

⁴ Matt. 27 ^{28ff}.

CHAPTER V

Jesus the Teacher

CRITICS of Christianity are always quite clear what they mean by Christianity ; yet the codes of conduct that have been accepted in the Christian Church have varied widely enough to call for an explanation. It is not only on questions of detail that Christians differ. There has not been unvarying consistency in the attitude of the Church towards big moral questions that face whole nations, questions of war and slavery, for example ; or even on the moral ends towards which the Christian life is to be directed. Is Christianity to find its centre of gravity in the world beyond the grave, or are its main efforts to be directed towards the transformation of this life ? Are we to judge our success in the Christian life by the extent to which we succeed in crushing our natural human desires, or by the measure in which we succeed with a good conscience in satisfying them ? Is the religion of Jesus concerned mainly with the welfare of the individual soul or is its main interest the rebuilding of society on Christian lines ? Are we to forgive all our enemies or only some of them ; is our forgiveness to be absolute or conditional ; and what is meant by forgiving enemies ? These

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are not questions of academic interest, yet on none of them has the Church given unambiguous testimony.

Is Christianity a purely spiritual religion to which the Hindu idea of ceremonial defilement is abhorrent? Are we to accept the teaching of Jesus that there is no uncleanness in religion but uncleanness of the mind and heart? If so, then the Lord's table can be defiled only by the participation of guests who have no sympathy with the will of Jesus. A Christian temple can never be desecrated by an officiating priest who loves the Lord, whatever his ecclesiastical antecedents. The sleeping-place of our Christian dead, if it is not contaminated by the mortal remains of a sensualist whose credentials are satisfactory, will not be defiled by sheltering the ashes of a follower of Jesus even if, like his Master, he worshipped God in unconventional ways and among unconventional people. Yet every one of these positions would be strenuously resisted by many Christians who do not call themselves Roman Catholics.

Either then Christianity is not the rigid scheme of life we had tended to conceive it; or if there is only one kind of life that can lawfully claim to be Christian, there are difficulties in discovering of what nature it is. In both these explanations there is a measure of truth. The garments even of the worthy guests at the wedding feast are not all cut in the same pattern. But we are chiefly concerned at present with the other point, that to find the mind of Christ is more difficult than we commonly allow.

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There are first certain difficulties connected with the material at our disposal. The formal teaching in which we are reasonably sure that we have the words of Jesus comprises a somewhat small proportion of the New Testament writings; and, apart from the parables, what teaching there is perhaps more often takes the form of occasional utterances than of systematic instruction. Again we seldom know with any certainty the original context of the sayings of Jesus. Moreover the teaching of Jesus, and indeed all the records of Jesus' life as we have them, are the result of a double process of sifting: first by the early Church, largely guided no doubt by her own needs; and secondly by the men who committed to writing such of the original traditions as had thus survived. One great difficulty in reading the Gospels is the extreme conciseness and restraint with which most of the stories are told, the general absence of comment and the avoidance of discussion of motive.

In all teaching the pupil has his part to play as well as the teacher. If men could be blind and deaf to Jesus in the synagogues of Galilee or the Temple at Jerusalem, it is still possible to see Him without perceiving and hear Him without understanding. Men have searched the Scriptures, searched even the records of the four evangelists, not that they might find Jesus, but that they might find proof-texts for theological dogmas, support for political or ecclesiastical systems, justification for their views on property. Even when our approach to Jesus is

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more honest, we tend to leave the interpretation of the Gospels largely to scholars; but the apostles, like their Master, were men of action. Jesus gave them instruction in periods of retirement, but their "practising school" was the school of life, of public life, in which vehement and virulent passions played a large part, in which after the first happy days there were murmurs, ever deepening in intensity, of anger and hatred and malice; while running through the last days was the trail of treachery and of blood. Can a student sitting snugly among his books hope to tell us all that is in it?

We are at present however chiefly concerned with the originality of Jesus' teaching methods. We make no progress in understanding the mind of Jesus till we realise that He never intended to be a second Moses. We rail at the Pharisees; but Pharisaism, like all other powerful human institutions, derives its strength from the extent to which it answers a universal human instinct. We all like to have our moral problems solved for us. When faced with some difficult ethical question, it is so much easier to turn up a passage in a book or go to a priest than to think it out for ourselves and accept the responsibility. Jesus came, not to give new laws, but to inspire us with a new spirit, but we find it hard to take this in. When we have to make up our minds on questions of war or peace, divorce, Sabbath-keeping, the relation of the Christian to the State or to the law-courts, we read the Gospel to find out what legislation Jesus has given on these

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matters. But if the truth is that Jesus had no idea of giving any legislation on these or any other matters, we cannot be surprised if those who will have it that the Gospels are a new law book differ as to what they find there.

Jesus' name for Himself, the "Light of the World," describes exactly His conception of Himself as a moral legislator. He illumines for us the world, its people, things, and institutions; and by lighting them up and revealing them to us as they are, He illumines our duty towards them. He teaches by giving insight. We do not see the angry man in his true nature till we see the murderer he sometimes becomes.¹ Murder is not always involved in malicious anger, but it is always implicit in it. The use of oaths involves a double standard of truth². The very existence of a system of oaths is an impressive commentary on the prevalent standard of veracity. Jesus invites us to bring our conversational standard up to our oath standard, so that oaths will be no longer necessary. Literalists may if they choose refuse to take oaths in a court of law, provided they understand that that is not what Jesus meant. The lustful act is not self-contained.³ It is the end of a process which begins with the lustful look. The defilement of the act is inherent in every stage of the process from the beginning.

This is Jesus' method all through. He did not prohibit His followers from joining in the Temple worship. It was only in the course of experience

¹ Matt. 5^{21f}.

² Matt. 5^{33ff}.

³ Matt. 5^{27f}.

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that they gradually found the Temple worship incompatible with Christian worship. So far as we know, Jesus did not explicitly abolish the system of sacrifices. It was not He who turned the Jewish Sabbath into the Christian Sabbath. His sole legislation about the Sabbath day consisted in reminding us of the meaning of the Sabbath: it is the day of which the Son of man is Lord,¹ a day for doing good,² a day which is meant to be not a bringer of burdens but a lightener of burdens.³ He abolishes the absurd confusion between physical and moral defilement by pointing out the obvious fact, easily forgotten like so many other obvious facts, that the seat of moral defilement is in the will, neither in the stomach nor in the skin.⁴ Even if we could succeed in wresting some of the words of Jesus into a system of legislation, we are investing Him with a function with which He never invested Himself. Any method of using the Gospels which tends to make the Christian life consist in blind adherence to mechanical rules is contrary to the whole spirit and purpose of the teaching of Jesus.

Not only does Jesus consistently refuse to sit in Moses' seat. One of the surprises of the Gospels is the way in which He abstains from moral comments in circumstances which seem to call for them. As He tells the story of the unmerciful creditor,⁵ He makes no criticism of the system which first enabled a money-lender to charge usurious interest and then

¹ Mark 2²⁸.

² Luke 69.

³ Luke 13^{15ff}.

⁴ Mark 7¹⁵.

⁵ Matt. 18^{23ff}.

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delivered bodily into his hands the insolvent debtor and all his family. But here as always Jesus is intolerant of dullness. He has no need to tell us that His soul is aflame with indignation at the whole system of usury and all its concomitants ; but that is not His point at the time and He will not be turned from His point. His picture of the king contemplating war¹ gives no hint of His attitude to war, any more than the introduction of the fatted calf in the story of the prodigal is a point against the vegetarians.

Is this an ineffective method of teaching ? Is it possible for any compelling Christian sentiment to arise on subjects on which Jesus made no definite pronouncement, and on which we are left to the accuracy of our insight into His mind ? For answer we point to the facts that though Jesus said no word on slavery, yet Christianity has abolished slavery from its dominions ; that in the Gospels there is only one reference to the treatment of prisoners in gaols, yet the spirit of Jesus has transformed our whole method of dealing with crime and will transform it still further ; that the present gradual and even rapid recognition of the true place of woman in the home, the Church, and the State, is but a tardy awakening to Jesus' conception of her.

Like all true teachers Jesus worked largely in the concrete. He dealt thus and thus with this one and with that one, and as we watch Him, we know that we see the working of principles, eternal and

¹ Luke 14³¹

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universal. But just because we see these principles as applied to individual people with their own characters and their own circumstances, characters and circumstances which for the most part are unknown to us, often we are not quite sure that we grasp the point. The rich ruler was told to sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor.¹ Does this command apply to all? Or only to those who are called to be apostles? Or to all rich people? Or only to this particular rich man in his peculiar circumstances.

Of one thing we may be sure: Jesus' sayings to individuals are never dictated simply by the emotion of the moment. The eternal principle is always there, can we but find it. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"² is no mere outburst of gratitude. For the thief has made confession of his guilt: "We indeed justly." He has acknowledged that Jesus is suffering for no sins of His own: "He has done nothing amiss." This tribute to Jesus wrung from the agonies of the dying criminal was not expressed as Church councils expressed it later. Was it less convincing? In the hour of Jesus' weakness, pain, and shame, the hour when He looked less like an earthly king than He had ever looked before, the darkened soul of the outcast saw the crown on Jesus' brow that was hid from all else, and he died with a prayer to the King:—"Jesus, remember me when you come in your Kingdom." He had passed his confirmation test.

¹ Mark 10²¹.

² Luke 23⁴³.

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Our Lord again frequently adopted a device with which all teachers are familiar, of giving in an absolute way a principle or a command which is not absolutely applicable, leaving to a later stage in the development of the pupils explanation of the limitations and conditions. Thus He says quite simply : —“ Ask, and it shall be given you.”¹ That is by no means the whole of His teaching of prayer ; it is by no means all that the mature Christian requires to know about prayer. Apart from intelligent conceptions of what is meant both by asking and receiving, a literal acceptance of the words of Jesus will lead to much disappointment. But the principle as He gives it is the essential fact round which all our thoughts on the subject of prayer must centre. God wants to answer prayer ; God is able to answer prayer ; God does answer prayer ; when our prayers seem not to be answered the reason never is that God is unable or unwilling to help us.

Nor is Jesus always careful to remind us how each principle He enunciates does not abrogate the others. “ Selling all that we have and giving to the poor ” must somehow be made compatible with the discharge of our family and our other social obligations. “ Loving our enemies ” does not absolve us from the duty of protecting women from insult or children from pain. But Jesus does not explain all this in so many words. He came to save our minds as well as our bodies and our souls. If we refuse to think we shall never see life as He

¹ Matt. 77.

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meant us to see it. Jesus makes magnificent demands from us, all our allegiance, the consecration of every organ of our bodies, all our possessions. Why should we resent it so much if He expects us to use our brains in dealing with His teaching? If God has given us ears to hear, shall we not use them?

When we try to look out on the world with the eyes of Jesus, do we not tend to rely too exclusively on His mere words? With any religious teacher, how much more with Jesus, it is not the words that impress us but the personality behind the words. The sayings of Jesus are often best taken as a commentary on His life. We forget at times how many of His utterances, on the breaking of family ties, the gaining of the world at the expense of the soul, the blessedness of persecution, the treatment of enemies, hospitality to the poor, were spoken out of the fullness of His own experience. The school that Mark represents, the school that concentrated on the life, was not depreciating Jesus as a teacher. Even if we had no record of His formal teaching, Jesus taught as He healed the people and supplied their physical needs; He taught as He lay silent while the woman of the city kissed His feet and anointed them,¹ as He stooped and wrote on the ground in presence of the adulteress and her accusers.² He taught as He wept over Jerusalem,³ as He agonised in the Garden;⁴ He taught too as He stood silent before His judges, as He bore the mocking and the scourging, the pain and shame of the cross.

¹ Luke 7:38f. ² John 8:6. ³ Luke 19:41. ⁴ Luke 22:44.

CHAPTER VI

Jesus' Use of Figurative Language

ONE of Jesus' instructional methods is so much of the essence of His teaching, is so manifestly bound up with His whole conception of the mutual relations of God, man, and nature, that it merits separate notice. Readers of the Gospels have not always realised the part played in them by figurative language. The point is not that Jesus used such language, but that He used it constantly and in all kinds of connections. It was His favourite teaching instrument.

The accounts of the Temptation which presumably came from Jesus are all given in pictorial form. The point of one of them was the temptation to put a literal interpretation on a poetic idea in the ninety-first Psalm.¹ Jesus' defence against the early attacks of the scribes and Pharisees is all expressed in figures. "Healthy people do not need a doctor, but only sick people."² "The friends at the wedding feast cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them."³ "No one sews a piece of undressed cloth on to an old garment."⁴ "No one pours new wine into old skins."⁵

¹ vv. 11, 12. cf. Matt. 4⁶.

See Mark 2¹⁹.

⁴ Mark 2²¹.

² See Mark 2¹⁷.

⁵ Mark 2²².

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The sacrifices required of His adherents are expressed in metaphors: the tearing out of a right eye,¹ the cutting off of a right hand.² The alternative to entering into life is to go into Gehenna, the unquenchable fire.³ At least two of the three candidates for discipleship at the end of the ninth chapter of Luke are dealt with in figures of speech. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." "No man who looks behind with his hand on the plough is fit for the Kingdom." The "Sermon on the Mount" abounds in figures. Jesus' experiences in His last hours are a cup which He has to drink.⁴ His death in its aspect as His entrance on a glorified life is ■ baptism.⁴

Jesus taught not only by figurative language but also by figurative deeds; for example, in His baptism in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, at the feeding of the five thousand, in the feet-washing scene, and especially at the Last Supper. In the fourth Gospel the miracles are "signs," and throughout the Gospel one of the leading motives is the use of pictorial language to describe the personality of Jesus, the Life He has come to give, and His relation to His disciples; and the misunderstandings to which this language leads.

Jesus also did not disdain the use of irony. "I have not come to call just men."⁵ "Who has little forgiveness shows little love."⁶ The publican went

¹ Matt. 5²⁹.

² Matt. 5³⁰.

³ Mark 9⁴³.

⁴ Mark 10³⁸.

⁵ Mark 2¹⁷.

⁶ See Luke 7⁴⁷.

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home accepted rather than the other man who had not even asked to be accepted.¹ He urges the Scribes and Pharisees not to come short of the guilt of their fathers, a piece of irony which has apparently been too much for the transcribers of the manuscript since they have been at pains to alter it.² At the end of the parable of the dishonest factor Jesus tells the disciples in their own interests to make friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; which advice, instead of being altered by shocked scribes and commentators, has had the more unfortunate fate of being taken literally.³

We have seen also how fond Jesus was of hyperbole, that exaggerated form of speech in which we put a point very strongly in order to bring out our essential meaning. "If anybody slaps you on the right cheek, hold up your other cheek to him too. If a man makes a claim on your undergarment, hand him over your outer garment as well. If you have to give forced service for one mile, give voluntary service for another mile. Give to every beggar. Never turn your back on a borrower."⁴

Again and again Jesus' audience and even the disciples misunderstood Him. When on the last night Jesus told His disciples that any one who had no sword must sell his cloak and buy one,⁵ we are not surprised to find the disciples examining their resources and producing two swords. It was the most pardonable of all their misunderstandings. But Jesus

Luke 18²⁴.

² Matt. 23³². See Dr. McNeile's Commentary.

³ Luke 16⁹.

⁴ See Matt. 53⁹⁻⁴².

⁵ Luke 22³⁶.

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will not explain. He was being done to death by men whose religion was a round of ceremonies which had long ceased to have any meaning. The followers of Jesus must learn to think, learn the meaning of all the symbols they use, and of the word-symbols their Master uses.

The Gospels make much of the dullness of the disciples; so much that some have told us it is overdone; that if Jesus ever had made the announcements the Gospels record of His death and resurrection the disciples could not have misunderstood. Could they not? The way in which we persist in thinking that we are honouring Jesus when we turn His poetry into prose, and the monstrous conceptions of God and Jesus and human life that have in consequence been entertained by whole generations, should lead us to be very wary in fixing limits to the dullness of disciples. Listen to this even from Goldwin Smith:—"Christendom has had practically to qualify the teachings of its founder and treat them at most as correctives of inordinate devotion to gold."¹

Christian servants have sometimes thought loyalty to Jesus involved the refusal to call their masters by the only name that described the relationship.² Others have found in the Sermon on the Mount a rule forbidding Christians to act as magistrates.³ Nor must we think of these as trivial faults, much less as virtues; for in finding in Scripture lessons

¹ "The Founder of Christendom," p. 22.

² Matt. 23¹⁰.

³ Matt. 7¹.

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which are not there, we fail to find the much more important lessons which are there. To the last Jesus claimed the right to speak in His own way. The effective charge against Him was that He claimed to be King of the Jews.¹ The meaning the phrase would have in the records of Pilate's court was not the meaning it had in the mind of Jesus; yet He would not alter it. It was the title that described His place in the history of God's chosen people and of mankind. Nor did Jesus "die for a metaphor." The soldiers who made sport of His title might misunderstand: neither the Pharisees, nor Pilate, nor Herod misunderstood. Jesus died, not because He claimed to be, but because He was, King of the Jews.

But by far the most striking illustration of Jesus' pictorial methods of teaching is His use of the parable. The disciples asked an explanation of His adoption of this form of teaching, but it may well be that their question covered our Lord's whole use of figurative language. In Matthew's account Jesus gives the answer we expect, that He used concrete illustrations because the people do not understand abstract teaching.² But in Mark,³ followed by Luke,⁴ Jesus is represented as saying that He employs the parable method to prevent people catching His meaning; while in all three accounts the suggestion is made that there is an inner circle, a Freemasonry of enlightened disciples, and an outer circle to whom much or perhaps everything is dark.

The passage is at first sight somewhat perplexing;

¹ Mark 15²⁶.

² Matt. 13^{10ff.}

³ Mark 4^{10ff.}

⁴ Luke. 8^{9f.}

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nor is much light shed on it by the reference of the commentators to the "judicial blindness" which is the penalty of a worldly life hostile to spiritual influences. Even this pious phrase cannot reconcile us to the picture of Jesus deliberately excogitating forms of expression which would conceal His meaning from the major part of His audience. This would indeed be putting the lamp under the flour measure or under the bed; a thing which people do not do, as Jesus reminds us in a saying quoted in the same chapter of Mark.¹

Yet we must not assume that the tradition followed by Mark and Luke had no basis in fact. Jesus explains His use of the parabolic method in words taken from the story of the call of Isaiah²—one of the Old Testament passages most frequently quoted in the New. Isaiah looking back recalls that his message has met with so poor a response that it almost seems as if the very object of his call had been to make the people less spiritual and more hard-hearted than they were before. Our Lord with a similar experience perhaps behind Him may well have repeated the words in the same spirit of sorrowful irony.

His object in His parable teaching as in all His teaching was ultimately to reveal truth, never to conceal. Yet He knew that much that He said would be unintelligible to the bulk of His hearers at the time. There was an inner circle and there was an outer circle, or rather there were many

¹ Mark. 4¹¹.

² Isaiah 69^f.

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circles with varying degrees of enlightenment ; but the principle of grading was simply spiritual opportunity and receptiveness. The disciples had private instruction that was not open to the crowd. In some cases we know they were specially asked to conceal till the time was ripe for publication, truths that had been revealed to them ; such as the Messiahship of Jesus¹ and the story of the Transfiguration with all that it involved.²

Much of the instruction given in the parables would be of far more interest to the leaders of the Christian band than to the ordinary members of the Church. This is true for example of the Sower³ which rebukes despondence and gives guidance as to evangelistic methods ; of the Tares,⁴ which shows how to deal with interlopers in the Church ; and of the Mustard Seed, designed to give comfort in the day of small things.⁵ Much, too, of the instruction that Jesus gave, even to the disciples, consisted not so much of trees of knowledge as of germ truths, which in the nature of the case could only gradually come to maturity. May we not indeed say of the parable collection as a whole, that it is not so much a mine which we may exhaust in course of time, as a river which has new refreshment for each new seeker in each succeeding age ?

What has as a matter of fact been the effect of our Lord's use of the figurative method of teaching ? The great parables such as the Prodigal Son⁶ and the

¹ Mark 8³⁰.

² Mark 9⁹.

³ Mark 4^{3ff}.

⁴ Matt. 13^{24ff}.

⁵ Mark 4^{30ff}.

⁶ Luke 15^{11ff}

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Good Samaritan¹ have for ever lit up for us the loving face of God, and the heart of the man that is to be when the spirit of Jesus has accomplished its long work. Even in their case it may well be that exegesis has by no means said its last word : and who will tell us for certain the meaning of the wedding garment² or of the story of the Dishonest Factor?³ The endless discussions of what Jesus meant by the " Son of Man " or the " Kingdom of God " suggest that at times He may have had other objects in using figures than immediate illumination. Is it that human language is too dull an instrument to express the truth of God ; or is it that Jesus would have His words stand for all time challenging us to watch, to remain awake, to search and search the infinite depth that is in them ?

Jesus used the parable method with the freedom with which He made us free in every department of our lives. Misdirected industry and ingenuity in the service of that deadly literalness which is as hostile to Jesus to-day as it was in the days of His flesh, have tried to rob of beauty and of meaning even the parables, by the assumption that every character and every incident must have their spiritual counterpart. At the opposite extreme are those who gravely inform us that Jesus must not use allegory and that each parable can have only one lesson. One can imagine the surprise with which Jesus would have heard that He who came to deliver men from all kinds of bondage was to be bound by

¹ Luke 10^{30ff.}

² Matt. 22^{1ff.}

³ Luke 16^{1ff.}

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laws devised by grammarians in distant ages. He used the parable as seemed to Him best.

Jesus' love of the parable is one more proof that the world, all the world, is to Him God's world. The chirping birds, the waving grass, the green shoot as it peeps above the earth, all speak to Him of God. The wedding procession, the pearl merchant on his journeys, the fisherman sorting his fish, all are preaching sermons. To Jesus the whole earth is full of the glory of God. The same God who works in the heart of man works in the growing corn and in the baker's leaven. The same problem of different degrees of worth and worthlessness that face us in human character meets us also in the farmer's fields and in the fisherman's nets. As has been said: There is spiritual law in the natural world.

We sometimes picture Jesus with some lesson that He wishes to teach looking round for an apt illustration. Is it not more natural to suppose that for the most part the illustration came first, or rather that for Him the distinction between natural and spiritual hardly exists? He sees a field in which part of the seed has come to nothing, while the remainder has borne a luxuriant crop. "That," He says, "is just like My own work." In another field weeds appear among the wheat. He asks how the farmer deals with them. Perhaps already the disloyalty of Judas has become apparent and He knows His followers will often have to face this problem. Jesus, like the farmer, knows that the method of

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summary ejection would mean an upheaval that might do more harm than good ; and though tares will never become wheat, a Judas by the grace of God may become a Peter. It is better to wait till the harvest ; let the new mind that is in Judas mature to its natural fruit in the betrayal ; then Judas will solve his own problem. Such introductory phrases as " How shall we illustrate the Kingdom of God ? " are no argument against this view, since this was a Rabbinic formula.

We have called the parables illustrations : but they are more than illustrations ; they are in themselves arguments. Jesus bids us study the feelings of men under varying circumstances and then have high and worthy thoughts of God. For the parables are stories of *people*. We speak of the parable of the tares ; but the story as Jesus told it was of a man who sowed good seed in his field and another man who sowed tares. What we call the parable of the hid treasure is really a story of a man who found hid treasure.¹ When we speak of the parable of the lost sheep,² it is apt to distract our attention from our Lord's point of view, which is not the experiences of the sheep but the feelings and the conduct of the shepherd who lost and found the sheep. The kingdom of God is not the irrational thing it sometimes seems to be. A pearl merchant who sells all his pearls is not necessarily a fool. If he sells to buy one worth more than all the rest combined, he has made a good bargain. Men know this, and a hundred

¹ Matt. 13⁴⁴.

² Luke 15^{4ff}.

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other things like this ; but it is all lost on them until they learn to feel as Jesus felt, that the spiritual life is not less real than the life of industry and commerce but far more real, not less earnest but more earnest, with far bigger questions to be faced.

Perhaps in no parable is it more important than in the Sower to remember that the parables are stories of people. Though we call it the parable of the sower we often expound it as if it were the parable of the different kinds of soil. Jesus is represented as telling the story in a despondent mood, despondent because His preaching seemed to make so little impression. The underlying assumption seems to be that the farmer distributed the seed equally among the four kinds of soil, so that only a small proportion of the seed yielded fruit. Is this a possible assumption? No farmer would sow seed deliberately on an unploughed field-path. The seed that fell there fell by accident as the farmer came to the end of the row. Nor can we imagine that the farmer sowed seed otherwise than by accident or carelessness on a part of his field where he knew there was rock just below the surface. Surely the question of proportion between the fruitful and unfruitful seed does not arise.

The point is that the seed which does mature bears a glorious harvest, and that if the farmer finds a portion of his seed comes to nothing, he does not cease to cultivate ; he inquires the reason. In all three cases of failure the cause was want of preparation. The first soil wanted ploughing, the second pulver-

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ising, the third weeding. You cannot go to a nation of ignorant, superstitious, sensual idol-worshippers, and expect that if you simply preach the Gospel they will all at once understand and be drawn to the beauty that is in Jesus. There is first a long task of hard and patient preparation.

This is in part at least the meaning of the whole body of the parables ; that the spiritual world is not a chaos in which anything may happen, but a cosmos in which God works in an orderly way ; that it is not an abstraction of thought, but a reality ; that the whole subject is not one we can consider or ignore as we feel inclined, but that if we will not consider the spiritual world, face it with something of the intelligence we put into our daily work, it will overwhelm us.

But there are spiritual experiences for which earth provides no parallel. When Jesus wants to picture the graciousness of God's dealings with men or the churlishness of men's dealings with God, He has to distort the probabilities of human life. No vine-dressers ever treated the messengers and the son of their landlord as the vinedressers of God's vineyard treated His messengers and His Son.¹ The invited guests who make frivolous pleas of the claims of business or pleasure for absence from the wedding feast² are drawn from the life, but from the story of no earthly king or prince. The money lender who freely cancels his large claims on his debtor,³ the employer who pays twelve times the legal rate of

¹ Matt. 21^{33ff.}

² Luke 14^{16ff.}

³ Matt. 18^{27.}

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wages,¹ here we are not learning of God from our experiences of man, but from Jesus' knowledge of God we are learning what man might become.

It was not only as a stimulus to thought that Jesus adopted the pictorial method ; there is moral power in it. In our conflicts with temptation half the battle lies in getting a true conception of the two alternatives. Henry Drummond testified to the moral transformation effected in boys when they are taught to think of themselves as soldiers. Disobedience is now disloyalty. Rowdyism is disgracing the uniform. What abstract statements of the love of Jesus could have taken the place in Christian child-life of the picture of the Good Shepherd ?² Who does not find it easier to be faithful when he pictures himself as a steward guarding his Master's interests till He come ?³

¹ Matt. 209.

² John 10¹¹.

³ Matt. 24⁴⁵.

CHAPTER VII

The Silence of the Gospels

IF men who belong to the talking professions sometimes take cynical views of the importance of human speech, a study of the Gospels will not altogether reassure them. The silent figures of the Gospels play a large part in the story. The Good Samaritan utters only one sentence, and that is not good advice.¹ He gives instructions for the nursing of the wounded man and arranges to pay the expenses. The wounded traveller lying on the road, half-dead and perhaps unconscious, utters no syllable; yet as the passers-by approach one after the other, he classifies them as unerringly as the botanist sorts his specimens. Dives speaks but Lazarus is silent.² There are in the Gospels two stories of a woman anointing Jesus;³ in each case the woman is criticised; in each case the discussion goes on around her; in neither case do we hear the voice of the woman herself. In the scene in which Martha criticises her sister, Mary is silent.⁴ Our Lord, too, knew when silence was the most effective speech.⁵

We constantly discuss the teaching of the Gospel records. It is hardly too much to say that what they

¹ Luke 10^{30ff.}

² Luke 16^{19ff.}

³ Luke 7^{37ff.}; Mark 14^{3ff.}

⁴ Luke 10^{38ff.}

⁵ e.g., Matt. 26^{63.}

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leave unsaid is as impressive and instructive as what they say. It would have been so easy to be guilty of errors of taste or judgment ; but the Spirit of Jesus so controlled the mind of the early Church that the records are worthy of the Life.

It seems as if the records themselves conspired to deprive us of all material props for our faith, to compel us, if we would worship Jesus Christ, to worship Him in spirit. We do not know for certain the date or even the year of His birth. There is the great gap in His life between the infancy and the baptism. Over this period a veil is drawn which is lifted only once, at the scene in the Temple when He was twelve years old. Yet there were many who knew Him during this period. Can we imagine that among the first followers no reminiscences were current ? We know nothing whatever of our Lord's personal appearance, of His voice and accent, nothing of His dress beyond what we can infer from the customs of the time. He spoke in Aramaic, so that even those who read the Gospels " in the original " are reading only Greek translations of His actual words.

We are told that He was a joiner¹; yet we get no glimpse of Him working at His trade, nor do we know for certain whether His career as a tradesman ended when His public ministry began. We should have loved to know something of His home life, but our curiosity is not satisfied. We never see Him in the home at Nazareth (except in two very general verses

¹ Mark 61.

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at the end of the second chapter of Luke), and hardly ever in the pages of the Gospels is He brought into contact with the inmates of His old home. After the childhood of Jesus Joseph drops out of the story. Of Jesus' brothers from the Gospel records we know practically nothing but the names¹; of His sisters we do not know even the names.

And so it is with the men and women we meet on the pages of the four Gospels. The kind of information a modern biographer or novelist delights to give us of the characters to whom he introduces us is almost completely lacking. Physical appearance is never described simply to gratify curiosity. If physical peculiarities are mentioned, it is only to explain some point otherwise unintelligible; as when Luke tells us that Zacchæus was a little man to explain why he ran on in front of the crowd and climbed a tree when he wanted to see Jesus.² As a rule we are not told whether the people with whom Jesus has dealings are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, good or bad, if such points are not essential to the story. Even in the apostle circle, while in some cases we know what occupation they followed, in most cases even the social stratum to which they belonged is beyond our knowledge. The Gospel writers never dream of discussing their individual characteristics, and we are left to infer these somewhat precariously from the scenes in which they were actors. We have not even a momentary glimpse of the wife or children of any of the apostles.

¹ Mark 63.

² Luke 193.

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There are so many in the Gospel stories of whom we should have liked to know more. What became of the sick people that Jesus healed? What was their subsequent attitude to Him, and was their bodily healing accompanied by any moral change? What was the ultimate fate of the rich ruler? Why did the Baptist not join the disciple band, and why did he continue to have disciples of his own?

There are times when an unanswered question compels the questioner to search his conscience for the answer. Jesus was silent when the High Priest adjured Him to say whether He were the Christ.¹ He made no answer to the accusations of the high priests and elders before Pilate.² To all Herod's questions He makes no reply.³ To many of our questions, too, though for a different reason, Jesus gives no answer. We ask Him how to guide our lives, how to direct our industry and our commerce, how to govern the state, how to rule the Church; and in reply Jesus gives us His Spirit, and His great law of love. He will answer no questions He would have us answer for ourselves. We ask Him about life beyond the grave; and He tells us that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living,⁴ that they who have chosen Jesus here will be with Him hereafter,⁵ that the conditions of the life beyond are adapted to spiritual beings,⁶ and that the gulf between good and evil is as deep in the life to come as it is in this life.⁷ He has gone to prepare a place

¹ Matt. 26⁶³.

² Matt. 27¹². See v. 14.

³ Luke 23⁹.

⁴ Mark 12²⁷.

⁵ John 14³.

⁶ Mark 12²⁵.

⁷ Luke 16²⁶.

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for us.¹ There is much more, very much more, that we should like to know ; but Jesus is silent.

Perhaps nowhere is the reticence of the Gospels more marked than in dealing with the apostles. The early Church must have been deeply interested in the personality and the history of the apostles ; but from beginning to end their place is subsidiary. The Gospels are in no sense biographies of the apostles, not even of the greatest of them. When they are introduced it is not to shed light on them, but to shed light on Jesus ; when this purpose is accomplished they are withdrawn. Except for one or two general statements we never actually see the twelve working miracles, and they fail in the only case where we see them trying.² The Evangelists must, one would think, have been sorely tempted to tell the story of Judas. They cannot hide their horror of the man ; at every mention of his name it leaps out ; they cannot forget that the man who did this was " one of the twelve,"³ and even in the list of the apostles he is " Judas Iscariot who was to be a traitor."⁴ Judas made money by the treachery, we are told⁵ ; we can hardly imagine it was with him a mere question of money. The whole story must have been widely canvassed ; but the psychology of Judas is a side issue and the Evangelists pass on.

The refusal to speculate on motive is, on the whole, characteristic. Was it that the Evangelists were

¹ John 14².

² Mark 9^{14ff}.

³ Matt. 26¹⁴.

⁴ Luke 6¹⁶.

⁵ Matt. 26¹⁵.

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following Jesus' advice not to criticise others¹? Was it that they realised the difficulty of reading another's mind, the difficulty of reading even one's own mind, with its complexity of impulses? Or was it perhaps that they recognised the superfluity of such discussion in a world where facts are things done? Whatever Judas' motive may have been, the result was the arrest and crucifixion of the Master.

The silence of the Gospels is in the first place part of the answer of the early Church to the question: Who is Jesus? The works of Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, are not biographies; they are Gospels. They are not lives of Jesus; they are testimonies to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Other biographies are written to give us information; the Gospels are written to give us life: and this is as true of the first three Gospels as it is of the fourth. Their aim is to set before us, in all His saving power, Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Nothing that does not contribute to this aim can have any place in the Gospel record.

It would have been interesting and edifying to see Jesus in His boyhood and young manhood, to study Him in the workshop, to get some glimpses of His home life. But the Evangelists feel instinctively that the long years of preparation were not for the public gaze. It is no mere idle curiosity that leads us to want to know more of the people mentioned in the Gospels — what they looked like, how they

¹ Matt. 7¹.

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spoke, what had been their past history, what was their subsequent career. It is natural that we should want to know more fully why they did the things they did and said the things they said. But these are not the all-important things, and in the Gospels there is no place for anything that is not of supreme importance. The things that interest us in connection with other men in the presence of Jesus are not even worthy of mention. The Gospel writers have but one subject, the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as the King of that Kingdom. To them nothing else counts. That there are other interests in life they know ; but on the pages of the Gospels the King and His Kingdom are not so much the central theme as the only theme.

The difference between Gospels and Epistles does not lie in the position assigned to Jesus. In Gospel as in Epistle Jesus is Lord and Lord alone. The new thing in the Gospels is the recognition that what Jesus is to-day as the exalted Lord is only the perfecting of what He was in the days of His flesh ; that our conception of the Christ, the Risen Lord, can only be filled with content by a knowledge of Jesus "after the flesh," the knowledge of Him as He healed and preached and taught and prayed and suffered. But if the first Christians, strong in their direct communion with the Risen Christ, were tempted to think they had no need to remember the earthly Jesus, the generation that gave us in the Gospels a picture of Jesus as He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, are all the time not calling on

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us to admire a dead saint but to worship and trust a living Saviour.

In the first three Gospels there is little discussion of what we call the Person of Christ; but the question could never be far from the minds of the writers. In the early chapters of our earliest Gospel,^{*} we seem to hear the writer at the close of each scene challenging us: "Now who was this who did such things?" In incident after incident he delights to picture Jesus as Master, Master of Satan, Master of the wills of men, so that when He says "Come," men must come, a Master teacher, Master of unclean spirits, Master of leprosy and other diseases, Lord over sin so that He can forgive it, Lord of convention and tradition, Lord of the Sabbath.

The Gospels were written in response to many needs, but to one need in particular. At first apparently the Old Testament continued to be the Scriptures of the Christians. But the Old Testament could never of itself nurture the devotion or inspire the activities of the Christian Church. If we are to follow Jesus we must know where Jesus went. If the Saviour is to save us in every part of our being, He must become to us more than a dim splendour. Even the crucifixion has little power over us till we know who it was that was crucified. Has the Church ever fairly faced the question as it presented itself to the infant Churches, as it presents itself to us to-day? The custom in the Church of England of standing

^{*} Mark.

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while the Gospel passage is read is at least a testimony to the fact that the Gospels are not just one portion of the Bible among others ; but there must still be multitudes of people in our Church who, when they open their Bibles for edification, turn to any one part almost as readily as to any other.

In particular we have to deal more frankly than we have done in the past with the relation of the Christian Church to the Old Testament. The present position is that without remark or explanation we bind the two Testaments into one volume, giving the impression that they are equally authoritative as Christian Scriptures. Individual scholars have done much to guide Christian thought on the subject, yet mischievous ideas are still widely entertained. If Jesus freely distinguished in the Old Testament between the temporary and the abiding, may not His Church frankly do the same? The writer recently saw a newspaper letter, the writer of which announced that she had no use for the Christian Church, because in the Jewish Scriptures a man's wife is classed with his ox and his ass ! Are we ourselves not in large measure to blame that this confusion of thought exists within the Church as well as outside? And in non-Christian countries failure to distinguish between Jewish and Christian Scriptures is even more serious than at home.

CHAPTER VIII

God is no Respector of Persons

ONE of the characteristic notes of the Old Testament is the feeling of the insignificance of man, the transitoriness of man's life.

" Man is like unto a breath,
His days as a shadow that passeth."¹

To the author of the eighth psalm it is a miracle of grace that God should crown with glory and majesty " mortal man," who is but a speck in comparison with God's heavens, the moon and the stars. But in the teaching of Jesus infinite significance is man's birthright as a child of God. Jesus teaches us to despise death, never to despise life. The psalmist compares man to grass,

" Which sprouts up in the morning,
Which blossoms and sprouts in the morning,
But by evening is cut and withered."²

Jesus looks at this same ephemeral grass; but it brings Him different thoughts. It is a thing of beauty, a glimpse into the mind of the Artist who puts all His love and all His grace into His humblest handiwork. But in respect of its fleeting life, how *unlike* man. " If God dresses like this the common

¹ Ps. 144⁴.

² Ps. 90^{5c, 6}.

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grass, here to-day, tossed into the oven to-morrow, how much more (will He remember) *you*.”¹

To Jesus the tragedy of life is not the speed with which the end comes, but the fact that when it does come, so often it finds us unready. The bridegroom is later than we had thought, and when the warning cry comes our lamps are going out and we have no oil.² The Master arrives before we expect Him; we are neglecting our work and thinking only of enjoying ourselves.³ Life is a thing of grim earnestness, but it is not pitifully short. There is always time for all that God expects us to do, never time for anything else. Who ever thinks of the death of Jesus as premature?

But there is a more deadly pessimism than that of the psalmist; the feeling that the lives of some are infinitely precious in the sight of God and man, that all others belong to the rabble who are counted by the head. Men are prone to accept the verdict on them of those to whom they have been taught to look up, and distinctions originally artificial have a way of making themselves real. “Blessed are the poor,” but only so long as they are merely poor: when the poor man becomes a pauper with a pauper mind and a pauper heart he is no longer blessed. The Pharisee can see no use for the tax-gatherer in the Temple but to serve as a dark background for the dazzling whiteness of his own soul. The tax-gatherer accepts the judgment; he stands far off, so that his presence will not pollute the Pharisee at his prayers.⁴ On

¹ Matt. 63^o. ² Matt. 25⁸. ³ Matt. 24⁵⁰. ⁴ Luke 189^{ff}.

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the testimony of Jesus the one-talent servant is in more danger than the five-talent servant.¹ He has been told so often of his worthlessness that he has come to think his single talent not worth using.

We hear much to-day of the democratic ideal ; we know vaguely that it is a product of Christian teaching ; but it is not so easy to define the ideal. In some sense the essential equality of human beings seems incumbent on us as an article of belief and practice ; but when we try to give the phrase some concrete content it eludes us. Whether we look at physical appearance, health and strength, at intellectual tastes and powers, at capacity for appreciation and enjoyment, at character and disposition, what confronts us is not so much the wide range of divergence between individuals, nations and races, as the inconceivability that any kind of equality could ever be reached, even if anyone thought this a desirable aim. Ignorance may be instructed ; poverty banished ; weakness, disease and vice, more or less completely eradicated ; but the world of men and women will always be a world of variety.

If it is economic equality we seek, equality of income, we are faced with the fact that from a given income, one man or woman can get twice as much health, happiness and refinement as another, and then what becomes of our equality ? We claim the equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law ; it is a great day in a nation's history when first the rich and the poor appear in their simple manhood as they

¹ Matt. 25¹⁸.

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sue for justice ; but outside of our courts of justice which indeed most of us never enter, we are not men and women but only members of our class.

To many the pathway to equality has seemed to lie through the vote ; surely here if anywhere as we drop our voting papers into the ballot-box, each man counts for one and no man for more than one. The ballot-box has worked wonders and will work greater wonders still ; but we have now experience enough to know that this alone will never " fill up the valleys, level the heights and hillocks." Sometimes the democratic claim is for equality of opportunity to develop and use the faculties that God has given us. Does the world well to be angry with the sulky cowards who will not use their one talent when all the while men with five talents find every door barred by which they might enter to trade their gifts for the benefit of the human race, perhaps go to their graves not knowing that they have these talents because the world has never troubled to enquire ? The removal of barriers from the path of aspirants to fame and usefulness will mark a long stage on the road to Christian democracy, but will still leave us with contemptuous Pharisees and self-abasing publicans in many spheres.

What rankles in men's minds is not the class system and the sense of inferiority, but artificial and external principles of classification, the sense of *unjust* inferiority. So often, when we are judged by men and women, we are left with the feeling that we have been measured by a pitiful inch tape of speech

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or dress or social code, of money or abode or caste, instead of by the big measure of God's love and justice. How many of us would claim that we can look with impartial eye at a millionaire or a beggar, a king or a prisoner in a gaol, at a personal enemy, a leper, a negro ?

In what sense does Jesus make men equal ? As the panorama of the Gospel story passes before our eyes, we see Jesus in contact with all kinds of people : men and women, and little children ; a king of sorts, a proconsul, judges, and humble subjects ; His own countrymen and foreigners ; Jews, Samaritans and heathen ; rich men and beggars ; healthy people and sick people ; wise men, fools, and madmen ; scholars and illiterate men ; honest people and thieves ; moral and immoral. In every case we feel that Jesus gets down beneath the externals, down to the manhood and the womanhood. He is deceived by no show, however fair ; by no external appearance, however repulsive. Jesus too classifies men. As He goes on His way, they range themselves on His right hand or His left ; but everyone gets justice.

We have looked at the silence of the Gospels, the things they leave unsaid about men as well as about Jesus. As we stand by His side and watch the men and women go by, we forget to ask about them the questions we would ask, were we reading them by any other light than the Light of the world.

Jesus wants twelve men to be with Him and carry on His work when He is gone ; twelve theological

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students with a view to their subsequent appointment as ordained clergymen and missionaries and possibly bishops. What qualification will He look for? It is characteristic that we are not even told. It is an interesting and profitable speculation how many of the twelve, taking them as they were when Jesus called them, would have been accepted as regular students by a modern theological college; and even after Jesus considered their training complete, how many of them would have been regarded by a modern Church as fit for ordination.

We fear that some of the men He chose knew little about etiquette and that even their manners wanted polishing. Peter in some respects was not at all a nice gentleman. In looking for His candidates Jesus was not repelled by the sound of hammering, nor even by the smell of fish. He was not at all particular about scholarship. If He looked for gifts of oratory or organising ability the fact is not mentioned. Not that Jesus depreciated any of these things; some of them He may well have had in mind. But the men to whom He said "Come" were men who, when they came, henceforth had no interest in life but to know Him and to serve Him.

What of the pious man's suspicion of all who approach God in other formulæ and with another ritual than his own? The man who helped the wounded traveller was a Samaritan.¹ The one grateful leper among the ten was a Samaritan.² The father of the prodigal belonged to no sect.

¹ Luke 10³³.

² Luke 17¹⁶.

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To no class was Jesus more attracted, by no class was He more warmly welcomed, than the "sinners" who had little use for the priests and their services and their laws.

How does Jesus comport Himself before rank and official position? We see Him before Herod and before Pilate, meeting them in circumstances in which with most of us our instinctive respect for rank and title are at their highest. He is their prisoner and they have over Him the power of life and of death. But in the trial scene it is Jesus who has all the dignity. Neither Pilate nor Herod can ever have looked or felt so small or mean as they did that day. Yet in the Gospels there is none of the plebeian prejudice against rank. Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, was one of His followers.¹ Jesus answered the petition of an army officer² and the petition of a beggar³ with equal readiness.

The Gospel narratives do not gloss over the humble social position of the apostles, but neither do they gloat over it; they simply state it as a fact. When Paul, the scholar, the ex-Pharisee, boasts that he "withstood to the face" Cephas, the Galilean fisherman,⁴ with pride in the courage he showed, Jesus has indeed introduced new standards.

Wealth has more power than most of the distorting mediums through which we look at our neighbours to magnify the virtues and hide the blemishes. A rich man comes to see Jesus, a man with youth, education, influence, character, everything that

¹ Luke 83.

² Luke 7^{aff}.

³ Mark 10^{6ff}.

⁴ Galatians 2¹¹.

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makes life attractive and beautiful. Yet the last we see of him is as he turns away because the gateway into life that Jesus shows him is so narrow and He will not widen it an inch even for a capture like this.¹ But there is no bitterness against wealth in the Evangelist's telling of the story. He leaves us with no feeling but grief, an almost personal grief, as the young man's eager face overcasts and he goes slowly and sadly away. And there are other rich men in the Gospel story who, in the end, choose differently: Zacchæus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa; though each of them in his own way illustrates the pitfalls that wait for the rich man as he seeks the Kingdom.

If Jesus turns His search-light on to the rich, no less in His presence are we compelled to overcome our repugnance to poverty, even to pauperism, and its ugly accompaniments; to pierce beneath the rags and sores and find the man, with a man's longings, a man's feelings to be hurt or respected, a man's soul to be saved. For here too the Gospels teach, not by preaching but by giving insight. Half of our cruelty is ignorance. We judge whole classes of men after we have first shut our eyes: Jesus compels us to look at people, and when we look at them, often we find them transfigured. We speak of the change which passed over Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Would it not be nearer the truth to say that the change was in the mind of Peter, James, and John; that for a little while those who had entered

¹ Mark 10²³.

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most deeply into His spirit saw Him as He was and as He always was ?

If the people were blind to Jesus, no less were they blind to each other. To the pilgrims passing through Jericho on their way to the feast at Jerusalem, Bartimæus was a blind beggar on whom it was a good work to bestow a copper. Jesus has taught us to look on him and on all blind beggars and on all unlovely human beings with new eyes. Bartimæus' persistent, reckless faith was as welcome to Jesus as the marvellous trust of the army captain. In the last sad days three tributes were paid to Jesus that must have been as cold waters to a thirsty soul : the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the anointing at Bethany, the trustful prayer on the cross. It was the blind beggar that started the pilgrims on their chorus of praise to the Son of David,¹ it was a woman who anointed Him for His burial,² the trustful prayer that cheered His last moments came from a thief.³

A prejudice that dies hard, is the dislike and distrust of foreigners. Jesus spoke much on the subject, and when the question of the admission of the Gentiles to the Church arose it was natural that these sayings should be treasured. In the days of Elijah and Elisha, Jesus reminds us, it was a heathen widow of Zarephath and the heathen Naaman the Syrian, that God thought worthy of His gifts.⁴ The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, the Queen of the South made a pilgrimage from unknown distances to hear the wisdom of Solomon. When

¹ Mark 1047.

² Mark 143ff.

³ Luke 2342.

⁴ Luke 425.

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they saw the heavenly vision, dim though it was, they were not disobedient to it. Tyre and Sidon, even Sodom and Gomorra, would have been more responsive than the Jews if they had had the same privileges, and God will deal tenderly with them.¹

The guests at the feast in God's kingdom will be chosen from a wider circle than we think. They will come from all points of the compass²; they will have many names for God and their theology will be of many quaint and unconventional patterns. It was a Gentile army-captain of whose boundless faith Jesus said that He had met nothing like it anywhere in Israel.³ It was to a heathen woman that Jesus said: "Great is your faith."⁴ A pagan army-captain and his company paid the first tribute to Jesus after His death: "Truly this man was super-human."⁵ Are we sure that the Christian view of the relative position of Christians and pagans is always nearer the truth than was the Jewish view? It is a humbling and an educative experience to work among "the heathen." Perhaps if we were more willing to learn we might be more able to teach.

Yet the Gospels are just. They emphasise the lesson the Jews needed most, that even outside of Israel there were men who feared God and did what was right. But there were pagans as there were Jews who did neither; and the Gospel history makes prominent the fact that Gentile joined with Jew in the travesty of justice that culminated on Calvary.

¹ Matt. 10¹⁵, 11^{22ff.} ² Luke 13²⁹. ³ Luke 79. ⁴ Matt. 15²⁸.

⁵ Matt. 27⁵⁴. See Dr. McNeile's Commentary.

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Of pride-engendering class distinctions the scholar's contempt for the uneducated, based though it claims to be on a superiority that is essential, is not the least objectionable. The knowledge that does not humble us and teach us sympathy is no true knowledge. On the whole, the educated men with whom Jesus has dealings make a repellent picture: the big lawyers, the professors and theologians. But the New Testament has none of the illiterate man's suspicion of learning. It does full justice to the achievements of Peter and the other "unlearned" apostles; yet we try in vain to think what the history of Christianity would have been without the scholarship and the speculative power of the apostle Paul.

Nor can we trace in the history any professional bias. If the Jewish clergy have been unfaithful to their trust, it is the men that are at fault, not the office. They must be replaced by a Christian clergy. If the private soldiers behaved shamefully at the trial and the crucifixion, the sterling worth of one officer¹ and the honesty of another² have saved the honour of the military name.

The Gospels too provide material for a study of the psychology of a crowd, and of Jesus' attitude to the crowd. The unnamed multitudes play a large part, on the whole no dishonourable part, in the history. In the early part of His ministry Jesus lived much in the crowd; and when in the later days He confined His teaching more to the quiet of the

¹ Luke 7²³.

² Matt. 27⁵⁴.

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disciple school, ultimately it was for the sake of the crowd. But, whether wanting to make Him a King or to crucify Him, to be healed or fed or taught, the murmur of the multitude is seldom long silent. Jesus always feels the pathos of the crowd; He cannot look on a throng of people without wanting to help, be they peasants with weary bodies and hungry souls, or the citizens of the capital.

And Jesus believes in the crowd. It has the fatal weakness that it so easily becomes the prey of unscrupulous schemers; but when the "common people" are left to their own judgment they can be trusted. All through the story till the last chapter, the multitudes, however dimly they understood, saw more in Jesus than did the Pharisees. Jesus' authority, like that of the Baptist, came from God; but the authority of both is ratified by the judgment of the crowd.¹ And Jesus' influence over them lay largely in this, that to Him the crowd was never just a crowd; it was a crowd of individuals. He never healed in the mass, He dealt with each case separately.² If He would feed the multitude it must first become an orderly multitude.³ Each sheep in the hundred is never just one in a hundred, and when it leaves the fold it becomes *the* one in a hundred.⁴

The lesson of it all is summed up in the last crowded hours of Jesus' earthly life. All sorts of men and women play their part, greater or humbler, in the drama: Pilate, Herod, the officers and soldiers;

¹ Matt. 21²⁶.

² Luke 4⁴⁰.

³ Mark 6^{39f}.

⁴ Luke 15^{4ff}.

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Annas and Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin and the witnesses; the servants; the apostles and Judas; the crowd; the passers-by; the thieves; the weeping women in the background; Jesus always in the midst. In the light of the central figure we seem to see them all for the moment as God sees them; as they will see themselves on the judgment day; but the actors themselves were blind, all in their own degree.

To see men as Jesus saw them is in the first place to see them in the naked reality of their manhood, stripped of their trappings or their rags. It is not superiority that irks us but contempt, the contempt of a quack superiority that thanks God it is not as other men; whether its claims are based on birth or breeding or race, on health and strength, on education or money. When we meet true worth we think it no indignity to stand afar off with bowed head. Jesus deals very tenderly with the outcasts of every sphere; but He deals with them truthfully. The tax-gatherer is forgiven but he is not white-washed,¹ the harlot is forgiven but her past life is neither ignored nor extenuated,² the thief enters Paradise, but he enters not as an honest man but as a repentant thief.³

It is hard to see men as they are: apart from the light that Jesus gives it is impossible. But the demands of Christian justice and Christian equality are not yet satisfied. Jesus asks, what men so seldom ask, how we came to be what we are. The

¹ Luke 18¹⁴.

² Luke 7⁴⁷.

³ Luke 23^{40ff}.

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world judges us by our achievements ; Jesus compares our achievements with our equipment. The man with the one talent was not blamed because he could not produce the fruit of two talents or of five.

Sometimes it is not in equipment but in opportunity that we differ. The burden of life is unequally distributed. Some the sunset finds exhausted by the toil of a long day and the sweltering heat of the noonday sun. Others work for a brief glad hour in the cool of the evening.¹ One generation wins only at the cost of blood and pain and loss the right to live the lives God meant them to live ; their children enter into a peaceful heritage. In Christian countries the great Choice does not often involve the shame and peril that tax the courage of the follower of Jesus in other lands. The young churches of to-day reap the fruits of the intellectual and moral conflicts of the first Christian centuries. If those who have borne the brunt of the fight are not entitled to play the Pharisee over those who spend peaceful days in the conquered territory, still less does it become us to criticise the dusty, it may be blood-stained garments, the uncouth manners, the narrow bigoted outlook, of those who made our faith, our worship, our life, possible. When the day of reckoning comes, all who have done all they were invited or able to do share alike, and the share of each comes from the joint product of the work of all.

Jesus remembers too, that though knowledge is not goodness, it is an indispensable condition of good-

¹ Matt. 20¹².

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ness. The light of God's truth reaches us through varying densities of cloud. Everyone who has ever sat in a criminal court must have felt what a travesty of justice was even our boasted impartiality. We send men to gaol because the ignorance and vice and indolence in which they have been trained have borne their natural fruit. We have at long last recognised that our relation to the criminal does not begin when he enters the dock. Can we claim that even now we have made much more than a beginning ?

To see men as Jesus saw them is to see them as they are now in the present ; to look to their past and consider what were their capacities, their opportunities of knowing and doing. But we do not look on men with Christian eyes till we see in them, as Jesus saw, the vision of what they may become. The position of men at the feast of life is not fixed for all time. If ignorance or infirmity or social custom have placed us in a lowly station, our host may call us nearer the head of the table and fit us to hold our own there. The gulf that separates class from class is not the impassable thing we sometimes think it is. A little training, a little sympathy and encouragement, and lo ! the pariah becomes a Brahmin. Apart from Jesus the leading apostles were simply members of the crowd. The men of Nazareth had no faith in Jesus because they had known Him as one of themselves, and they could not imagine that there were within Him undiscovered possibilities.¹

¹ Matt. 1353ff.

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When Bartimaeus gets his eyes, with his earnest faith and his grit, he will tower above the men who used to give him alms.¹ The leper was not always a leper; let him come into vital contact with Jesus, and he will make good his place in society, show us that leprosy with its ugliness and its helplessness is but of the accidents of life, and teach us lessons of gratitude and courtesy.² To-day the demoniac is the terror of the lakeside. If he comes face to face with Jesus, to-morrow he will be the Christian evangelist. The harlot is beyond the pale, outside the range of touch or speech, even of the thought of the respectable. When she hears from Jesus the word of forgiveness, with her enthusiasm of gratitude, her impulsive devotion, she will win a place in the Church of God far above many of her spotless sisters who need no repentance.³

Past, present and future thus combine in the Christian estimate of personality. At the Lord's Table, when it is indeed the Table of our Lord, we have achieved in some measure a Christian democracy. We do not sit down as master and slave, employer and servant, male and female, rich and poor, white and brown, strong and weakling, learned and ignorant. We take our places as children of our common Father, who alike owe our life and our salvation to God the Son. We see the littleness of the things that separate, brought to the measure of God's love in Jesus that unites. We remember our neighbours' temptations and hindrances and our own misuse of God's gifts.

¹ Mark 10^{46ff.}

² Luke 17^{12ff.}

³ Luke 7^{36ff.}

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We think too of the day when faith shall have done its perfect work ; when, all our lameness and our blindness forgotten, they and we shall enter God's Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God ; and at last men shall see us in what all along has been the very truth of us, waiting to be revealed by the power of Jesus.

CHAPTER IX

The Colour Question

A QUESTION arises. Has Jesus got the facts of the world behind Him in the spirit of faith and hopefulness with which He meets all classes of disabilities, physical, mental, moral, social, racial? Or are there people doomed by the very circumstances of their birth to perpetual vassalage? To put it concretely, are the colour bar and the sex bar, for example, temporary and removable; or are they part of the constitution of things?

The race question, especially in its more virulent form of the colour question, has lurid possibilities in the near future; and it is not easy to see where we are going. Here again Jesus has given us no direct guidance, yet we have seen enough of His dealings with "dogs" of all kinds to know in some measure what He would demand of us. But if we wish to Christianise colour feeling we must first understand it. Of all barriers that separate men from one another it would seem as if the colour barrier would be the last to be brought down. In its power to prevent us seeing men and women as they are, colour is more effective than education or birth or money or rank or even clothes. Yet the explanation of this curious effect

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of difference in complexion is not obvious. How far is it due to instinct, how far to actual facts, how far to a vicious tradition?

The idea that a fairer skin implies racial superiority is ancient and wide-spread. Jeremiah's proverb "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" implies that the Ethiopian in contact with the fairer men of other nations would have liked to change his skin. Amos taunts Israel by reminding her that her people were no better in God's sight than the Ethiopians. "As for you, are ye not as the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?" "No more important, no better, no dearer, than the black men on the banks of the Nile."† Indian caste distinctions, if not originally colour distinctions, are at least inseparably bound up with colour questions. For the black and the brown races have their own colour problems, their own pride and shame as they approximate to or recede from the standard of the white man.

Yet we can hardly say that the association of a fairer skin with racial superiority is instinctive. Many in Britain have numbered among their acquaintances, or even their friends, people who were wholly or partially of coloured descent, without the faintest consciousness of any colour barrier. The feeling that would exclude even educated Indians from certain hotels is in Britain a pure exotic. Impressionable people even find a certain element of romance in a dark skin, and Othello can still find his Desdemona. There have been ages when, quite apart

† Dr. McFadyen: "A Cry for Justice," p. 131.

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from any Christian influence, an Oriental or African origin formed no bar to the most effective recognition in Europe. As the author of "Ecce Homo" reminds us: "So signally, so much more than in later and Christian ages, were national distinctions obliterated under the Empire, that men of all nations and languages competed freely under the same political system for the highest honours of the state and of literature. The good Aurelius and the great Trajan were Spaniards. So were Seneca and Martial. Severus was an African. The leading jurists were of Oriental extraction."¹ In a famous verse of the Epistle to the Galatians² Paul tells us that in Jesus the distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free man, male and female, has been abolished: he makes no reference to what to us would be the greatest triumph of all, that we should forget the difference between fair skin and dark skin.

Apparently it is only when we meet the coloured foreigner in his own home, or when he invades our territory in sufficient numbers to become an important factor in the life of the people, that we become conscious of hostility. But colour Pharisaism, even if not instinctive, is easily acquired. To put one's foot on the deck of an Indian liner is to inherit the tradition. So far as India is concerned we are not speaking of race hatred, of which there one sees comparatively little, at least on the British side. Nor are we thinking of cruelty, which, at least in its more extreme mani-

¹ Page 124, 1892 edition.

² Gal. 3²⁸.

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festations, is sufficiently held in check by the law. The relations between Europeans, especially the older men holding responsible posts, and their Indian colleagues and subordinates, are often friendly, sometimes even affectionate. We are thinking rather of an attitude, of the European's ineradicable conviction that any white man, simply because of his whiteness, is of the "heaven-born;" and that all coloured men are morally if not physically "niggers."

One reason for the special bitterness of colour contempt is that it combines in itself all other forms of Pharisaism. The Oriental suffers by comparison in this way—that the Europeans who go to tropical countries are picked men, above the average in physique, in grit and resource, in education and general ability, far above the average of their race in point of wealth, usually holding positions of responsibility which bring out the best that is in them. It is astonishing how soon in such an atmosphere one contrives to forget the unpleasant facts of life at home. We compare the people among whom we live, not with the real people at home and the actual conditions of their lives, but with people and conditions that exist nowhere outside of our imaginations.

The white man attaches enormous importance to his physical superiority over the coloured. We may grant that this superiority usually exists; and we may conveniently forget the giants among the American negroes, the recent history of the prize ring, the stamina of the Japanese, and the fine specimens of physical manhood one sometimes sees

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among people who have lived all their lives in the plains of India.

It is difficult to say how far colour contempt is due to economic causes and is a form of fear. Economic considerations certainly aggravate racial feeling, as is sufficiently evidenced by the bitter British and especially Colonial and American hostility to the competition of coloured labour with white labour ; a hostility due to the white man's fear of the lowering of his standard of living. Sometimes also there are curious developments of the colour feeling that would seem to suggest that the economic factor predominates. Booker Washington, for example, was once escorting home an invalided Red Indian student of the Hampton Institute. When he stopped at an hotel he found that while the Indian could be received without difficulty, he himself, as a negro, was excluded.

Yet it is easy to exaggerate the influence of the fear of economic subjugation by a race whose civilisation is believed to be inferior. Men like Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet, resent the fact that while they are in Britain they are treated as educated gentlemen, but when they go back to their own country, in the eyes of Anglo-India they are only Indians. Race feeling is certainly not confined to men engaged in industrial or commercial life.

Among the ancient Greeks and Romans the counterpart of the modern white man's feeling for a dark skin was the contempt for the barbarian races. They judged men by their attainments in literature,

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in the arts and sciences, in general "culture." The cultured man's feeling for the barbarian is still no small element in colour prejudice. In this connection the white man has been guilty of a false analogy. Many of the coloured races with which we first came in contact were, judged by any standard, degraded; and our feeling of superiority was in their case no mere race prejudice. Semi-consciously we have tended to class all coloured races with the lowest of them, and sometimes we who have judged have been largely or wholly ignorant of the literature, the philosophy, the art, of the races we have affected to despise.

We must take account also of the influence of religious feeling, an influence by no means confined to religious men. The Jewish contempt for the Gentile, while in part racial, was in large measure religious. This tradition also we have inherited, with many others more valuable. It is difficult for one trained in the atmosphere of a spiritual religion to view otherwise than with disgust and abhorrence the religious practices of polytheism, especially of idolatry. All the associations of the word "heathen" have contributed to our conception of "coloured man."

Perhaps however in the last analysis this particular form of race prejudice is based chiefly on unconscious or semi-conscious moral feeling. The Oriental virtues are in a measure different from the Occidental. We judge men by their possession or their lack of the qualities we most admire,

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naturally our own. If one could induce the average European to put into words his feeling towards some of the Oriental races, he would probably say that in his judgment they are not MEN. If one were to investigate further his conception of a MAN, no doubt one would find it is a creature that bears but the slightest resemblance to the MAN described in the Sermon on the Mount: a being with plenty of physical courage, a certain aggressiveness, a resolute insistence on one's rights, a determination to take no kind of injury "lying down," the possession of initiative and resource, general reliability, and within recognised limits, honesty and love of fair play.

But the Oriental has cultivated patience and courtesy, obedience, tact, and quiet endurance of wrong. We are not the best judges of the relative importance in the light of eternity of the virtues he and we have chosen to cultivate. The Oriental does not always shine in that complex of mental and moral qualities we sum up under the head of reliability; but especially in some of the humbler occupations there are countless instances of marvellous fidelity to trust. The Oriental tradition on the subject of courage is not quite the same as the Western, but only in defiance of all history could anyone maintain that courage, whether physical or moral, is simply a question of climate. And much of the proverbial dishonesty of the East is due to a different conception of the requirements of honesty.

Colour is only one symptom, though one of the most obvious symptoms, of race; but it is so closely

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connected with deeper and more essential race characteristics that one can hardly wonder that to the average man our biggest, one had almost said, our most hopeless, race problems appear simply as "the colour question." Perhaps the Christian Church has no more important task in front of her than to teach men Christian thoughts about the coloured races. Them, too, we must learn to see as they are, not with the jaundiced eyes of colour prejudice. We have to know them and we can know them only if we take the trouble to know them.

To see them as they are involves looking at their achievements, especially their achievements in the world of beauty and truth. We have to learn to judge them, not by the standard of manhood that we have chosen to exalt, but by the standard of the Perfect Man. If they accept us at our own valuation, as too often they do, it only makes it all the harder for us to judge them impartially. Many influences conspire to hide them from us, influences of language and dress, custom, poverty, contempt or indifference on the one side; suspicion and fear of ridicule on the other. We never do Christian justice to the brown man or the black till we have penetrated the disguise.

Is there then a natural equality of all races? We do not know what the phrase means; but it is Christian teaching that each individual in each race is an end to God and should be an end to man, that each individual has infinite possibilities and is worthy of our infinite pains. To speak of one Oriental people, the Indian is peculiarly susceptible to sympathy and

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kindness ; and in all our problems in India, including the political, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the personal element. What the Indian wants in his heart of hearts is not any abstract equality with the European, but to be treated not as a freak, nor a problem, nor as a dangerous animal to be soothed, but as a human being made in God's image like ourselves. If we treat him otherwise, our criticism of him will be much less penetrating than his criticism of us—which we shall never know.

Jesus meets every claimant for help with boundless confidence. The power of God that is in Him is ready for any emergency. So far as we can see, the idea that there may be some disease too far advanced for His help, some mind so deranged that the light of reason is extinguished beyond recall, some soul so enslaved by sin that forgiveness and renewal are inconceivable, does not once occur to Him. The only people for whom He has no hope are those who are not conscious that they have any need of help.

It is in certain branches of the mission field that this faith is brought to its supreme test. Are there races whose physical configuration is such that they are for ever doomed to a low standard of intelligence and therefore of life ? Is vice so much in the blood of certain races that Christian virtue is for them for ever impossible ? What of the influence of a tropical sun, enervating physically, mentally, morally ? We remind ourselves that the physical effects of a tropical climate are very imperfectly understood ; some of the facts of tropical life on which our pessimists

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rely are almost certainly due not to climate but to other and preventible causes. Only when Christian influences have had free play for a sufficient length of time shall we be able to trace climate and heathen tradition to their respective effects. But whatever obstacles may be pointed out by whatever science or want of science, we remember that, when Jairus' friends brought word that his daughter was dead, Jesus was in no way disconcerted. As Dr. Glover has said: "Jesus goes on."

Jesus has told us that the word "impossible" has no place in the vocabulary of a Christian. If we say to a mountain "Rise and fling yourself into the sea,"¹ it will be done. We know now that this is literally true. With modern appliances we could take the highest peak in the Himalayas and hurl it into the Indian Ocean. It would take time and patience and ingenuity and much hard work, but the only vital question would be: Do we really want it done? The triumphs of science and of all material endeavour are for those who believe that all things are possible to man's arm, man's brain, man's will. And whether we have been called to heal African jungle tribes or the drunkards and sensualists of Christian countries, the gift of life from the dead is in the hands, not of those who listen to the voices that say: "The case is hopeless; trouble the Master no further," but of those who hearken to the quiet reassuring word: "Do not be afraid; only have faith."²

¹ Mark 11²³.

² Mark 5³⁶.

CHAPTER X

The Women of the Gospel Story

THE Gospel records give little encouragement to the theory that women are only female men, and that their passport to recognition is the extent to which they do the things that men do. It is hardly too much to say that, quite apart from grammatical indications, no woman of Gospel story could be mistaken for any man. We hear much of the "equality" of the sexes; but even if we knew what the phrase meant, assuming that the relation between the sexes as portrayed in the Gospels is to be described in mathematical language, equality hardly seems the word. In what sense was Mary Magdalene the "equal" of Herod or of the soldiers who jeered at Christ?

Sometimes we are told that what the Gospel has done for women is to abolish the pagan idea that they exist only as a means to the comfort and the pleasure of men; in technical language that women are to be regarded as an "end," never simply as a "means." This is true and yet it is misleading. Would it not be more accurate to say that what Jesus did was to bring women—all the more convincingly that it was never done explicitly—under the whole scope of the moral law? Women have the same right that men

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have to be regarded as "ends," the same duty that men have never to regard themselves as ends, to recognise that they can reach self-development only by self-suppression in the service of others.

Woman's place in a Christian Society is secured not so much by any legislation of Jesus as by the absence of any special legislation ; by His simple assumption that all He said applied to women as well as to men, to men as well as to women ; by His unfailing treatment of the women He met as responsible beings, whose needs were as clamant as those of men and more clamant, who were as capable of understanding spiritual teaching, and often more capable of responding to it.

Heathen conceptions of women die hard. Pious people tell us with a sigh of conscious failure that the majority at Church service or prayer meeting is composed of women. The "virile" preacher who attracts men to listen to his eloquence is a being of a higher order than the ordinary preacher who has to be content with a larger proportion of the inferior sex. Have we quite rid ourselves, even in the Church, of the conception of women as ceremonially unclean? Jesus was grateful to the woman who anointed Him for His death : to-day a woman is not worthy to distribute the symbols of that death ; in some churches is not allowed to tell the story of that death. In Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female—except in the Church of Jesus Christ !

Jesus made all kinds of food clean. He taught us not to call the Gentiles common or unclean.

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Some day we shall extend the great emancipating word even to our fellow-Christians ; and lastly—or will women see to it that it is not lastly—women too will bring their gifts to the altar and the Church will find that the altar is unstained.

The delicacy and reticence with which every story is told in which we see Jesus meeting women is a triumph of Christian art, a triumph in which we feel the impact of the Master's own spirit. But we would have had more. If we could have had a fifth Gospel, we would have had a Gospel by a woman, by some Priscilla among the disciples, who could have told us so much that the men missed, especially about the women themselves. All through the story the women are in the background, in accordance with the tradition of the time ; yet all through the story they make their influence felt, sometimes in subtle ways. The apostles have left their homes ; but they have not forgotten their homes and their dear inmates, and once at least they remind Jesus of them.¹

We have already noted the silence of the women in the Gospels. We know the names of Jesus' brothers, not of His sisters. We cannot help wondering whether it was some supposed ethical interest that suppressed nearly all references to wives of apostles and left to us only one or two chance hints. Our knowledge even of Jesus' mother is of the scantiest. We have hardly any record of the ministry to the harlots, who could hardly have entered the kingdom in such numbers unless Jesus had made special

¹ Mark 10^{13ff.}

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appeals to them ; though the gem preserved by some happy providence at the beginning of the eighth chapter of John shows that our Lord's methods in His rescue work were as unconventional and as effective as His methods in all His other work ; and the story of the anointing in Luke gives an illuminating glimpse of the impression Jesus made on these outcasts.¹

Incidentally this last story reminds us that to be a " man of the world " is to be the antipodes of Jesus. The woman's repentance seems sincere, her gratitude and love genuine. But in such cases the wise course is always suspicion, hesitation, probation, even cynicism. It may be, but Jesus was not anxious to be wise. The woman had repented and her whole heart went out to the Saviour who **had** saved her. Jesus will utter no word that casts a shadow of suspicion on her sincerity, of doubt on her future. He does not even tell her to sin no more : " Your sins are forgiven," He says. Nor does He invite her to stay within the sphere of His influence, but He tells her to go, to " go in peace."

Jesus' own reticence with regard to women is sometimes striking, but always explicable. There was no woman among the twelve apostles ; perhaps in the nature of the case there could not be : the constant journeyings of the apostle band provide all the explanation we need. Jesus did not hesitate to draw on women's work or the domestic life for the subject matter of His parables ;² yet alike

¹ Luke 7:36ff.

² Matt. 13:33.

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in the history and the teaching the almost complete absence of scenes of home-life is characteristic and touching. When Jesus blessed the children it was not in their own homes.¹ In the wedding parables in the form in which we have them, the "Marriage Feast of the King's Son"² and "the Ten Maidservants,"³ there is no mention of the bride. But the former is concerned with the feast, not with the wedding; and in the latter there is good ground for believing that in the original form of the parable the maidservants went out to meet "the bridegroom and the bride," and that this was altered for theological reasons.⁴

In the story of the Prodigal Son⁵ the absence of a mother or a sister leaves such a blank in the welcome home that the great Word-Artist must have had some compelling reason for the omission. It is in the first place a tale of earthly love and forgiveness; yet the father, though he does not exactly represent God, is so meant to carry our thoughts on to God that, even at the cost of artistic effect, Jesus avoids all features in the story that might seem to countenance the degrading heathen conception of female counterparts to the male deities.

If we do not see all we should like to see of Jesus' work among women, we see the fruits of it. The boundless love and devotion of the women of Gospel story is their testimony to what He has done for them and been to them. The women of the Gospels

¹ Mark 10^{13ff.}

² Matt. 22^{1ff.}

³ Matt. 25^{1ff.}

⁴ See Dr. McNeile's Commentary.

⁵ Luke 15^{11ff.}

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are not interested in theology or in abstract problems. They are interested in Jesus, in the needs of themselves and those they love. Their religion is in large measure a sense of personal indebtedness.

In hardly any case do we know what became of the men on whom Jesus worked miracles. But we know what became of some of the women: they served. The women who supplied the material needs of the disciple circle when they were not being otherwise entertained were women who owed to Him the recovery of their health.¹ Among them was Mary Magdalene whose love was only the measure of her debt, for she had been cured of some overmastering disease which seemed to the superstitious onlookers the work of seven devils. There is a reminiscence of the healing on the Resurrection morning, when the word "Mary" brought recognition, as once a word in the same voice had brought peace to her tortured mind.²

Mediæval chivalry might have been a loftier institution than it was, had it studied the Gospels more. Jesus was the champion, not of a class of women but of all women who needed help. He fought the battles of the women who brought their children for Him to touch,³ of the repentant woman of the city,⁴ of the woman taken in adultery,⁵ of the woman who anointed Him for His burial.⁶ Not one of the women who come face to face with Jesus is held up for disapprobation, not one is harshly

¹ Luke 8^{2f}.

² John 20¹⁶.

³ Mark 10^{13ff}.

⁴ Luke 7^{36ff}.

⁵ John 8^{1ff}.

⁶ Mark 14^{3ff}.

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spoken to. The contemptuous expression He uses to the Syrophœnician¹ of the race to which she belonged was evidently accompanied by a tone or expression of countenance which took the place of inverted commas round the objectionable word. In His treatment of women there is no counterpart to the bitter attack on the Scribes and Pharisees. No woman turns away from Jesus as the rich ruler turned away; but Jesus calls to mind a woman, richer and greater than the rich young ruler, who had come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of one less than Himself.² Jesus singles out women oftener than men for special praise; and the faith or devotion of a poor widow, an out-cast or a Gentile, is as welcome as the service of the wife of a court official.

On the way to Jairus' daughter, though she was dying, or already dead, if we may trust Matthew, He had yet time to listen to a poor woman's story.³ And with what perfect art is the woman drawn in a word or two: the invalid outlook of her long weakness and pain, her modesty and shrinking shyness, the touch of superstition, her genuine faith, her new-found hope and joy, her gratitude.

It used to be said that Jesus constantly practised the principle of "accommodation," adapting His language to the intelligence and knowledge of His hearers. In one important respect it would be as near the truth to say that He steadily refused to "accommodate" Himself to His audience. He con-

¹ Mark 7²⁷.

² Matt. 124².

³ Mark 5^{25ff}.

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tinued to use figurative language in spite of the constant misunderstandings to which it led. His figures are worthy of their lessons, and people must wrestle with them till they do understand. Once He met one who had the wit to talk with Him in His own language, a woman. Speaking to the Syro-phœnician He called her people "dogs," the regular Jewish term. She took up the picture and completed it: even the dog may have his place in the family life.¹ Once more the picture had become an argument and it was the penetration no less than the faith that won the heart of Jesus.

Judging from our experience in India and elsewhere we should have imagined that the women of the Pharisaic class would have formed the backbone of the opposition to Jesus. So far as our records go, there is no indication that this was so. No woman, so far as we know, had any part, direct or indirect, in the crucifixion, and Matthew tells us that Pilate's wife tried to save Jesus.² Women, as has been said, were last at the cross, first at the tomb on the Resurrection morning.

The women of Gospel story have no "common sense," no capacity for recognising facts, no financial genius. When there was a large crowd to be catered for, it was one of the apostles that worked out the sum showing what the cost would be:³ As it turned out the sum was wrong. It was the disciples who had the forethought to protect Jesus from annoyance by the women who brought their children.⁴ The

¹ Mark 7²⁸.

² Matt. 27¹⁹.

³ John 67.

⁴ Mark 10¹³.

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widow who threw into the temple treasury the halfpenny that made all her earthly wealth had apparently no son to guide her.¹

When the woman in Simon's house broke the flask of costly ointment and poured it over Jesus' head, it was left to the practical disciples to point out the economic waste involved and the ever present claims of the Poor Fund.² To the woman the Master she loved—to whom instinct told her she could not much longer show her love—made a far more powerful appeal than the claims of any fund. On the Resurrection morning the two Marys and Salome went to the tomb.³

They knew there was a huge stone in front of it; they did not know who would remove it for them; they had made no arrangement to have it removed; yet they went on. When they came to tell of the angels' message, the level-headed apostles assumed that their story was the raving of unstrung women. Are the "practical" women of the modern Church in the truest line of the apostolical succession of women?

In His account of the horrors of the last days, Jesus has a thought for the sufferings of pregnant and nursing women,⁴ and nineteen hundred years later we too, if we have not yet learned Jesus' sympathy for them, have at least begun to recognise that it is not sound economic policy to let such women continue to take their places in the ranks of our industrial army.

There is one aspect of the relations between men

¹ Mark 124²ff.

² Matt. 26⁸ ff.

³ Mark 16¹.

⁴ Mark 13³⁷.

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and women in which the word equality has a meaning. In the story at the beginning of the eighth chapter of John, the Pharisees bring to Jesus the woman only. Jesus reminds them that this sin is not confined to women. He knows nothing of various shades of social purity. Sociologists point out that transgression on the part of women has far more serious consequences for family life than laxity on the part of men. But if a man forgets his manhood, has that no consequences for family life? Jesus has high thoughts of men as well as of women, far too high thoughts to allow that man can ever in any relation of his life be simply an animal.

Jesus raises the level of the whole subject almost as much by what He leaves unsaid as by what He says. As Dr. Glover reminds us, Jesus never warns men against women. Nor does He warn women against men; but He warns men against themselves. He would check the evil at its source. Jesus would not have women wronged even in thought; for the unchaste look is not only a shame to the man but an insult to the woman. But in this matter as in all others, women have their honour largely in their own hands. It is theirs to abstain from everything in dress and behaviour, and in their choice of companions, that will expose them to this subtle form of insult.

Once we do see Jesus in a home scene,¹ in the home of Martha and Mary—perhaps after His ministry began, the nearest approach to a home

¹ Luke 10:38ff.

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that He had. Once in the same scene He has to rebuke a woman, if we can call His gentle reminder a rebuke. We are commonly told that Martha represents the spirit of service, Mary the spirit of devotion. Perhaps that is hardly fair to either sister. For Martha's complaint implies that Mary usually did her share of the domestic work, and if Martha had not the spirit of devotion, why did she invite Jesus to be her guest?

In His answer to Martha's appeal Jesus does not even say that the part which Mary had chosen was better; nor that Martha was wrong in her choice; and He who notes every cup of cold water given to a disciple would never let word or tone suggest that He was ungrateful for Martha's kindness. Yet rebuke, however gentle and courteous, is implied. What was Martha's fault? Certainly not her hospitality, not her work and loving service; nor was Mary praised for her idleness. Absence of service is not devotion. Nor is Martha blamed for extravagance. There is a place in the Christian life for costly service.

Martha has decided that for that evening at least her sphere of work is the kitchen; no one has interfered with her decision. She has decided the scale on which the entertainment has to take place and again she has her way. But Martha claims the right to decide Mary's sphere of work as well as her own, and it is then as always that the trouble begins. If Martha's judgment of Mary's conduct were correct, it was a sister's duty to hide the selfishness, not to call attention to it. Martha's distracted effort to

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do justice to the occasion has had its natural sequel in loss of self-control. Forgetting the courtesy due from hostess to guest and from disciple to Master, she even reprimands Jesus.

The point of the story is that Jesus was speaking and had at least one eager listener. Martha was not listening, and it may be that her estimate of where her own duty lay was just. But in her judgment it was more important that Jesus should get a sumptuous meal than that Mary should hear His teaching. Hospitality usually most welcome may become embarrassing. No gentleman wishes to receive hospitality that severely taxes the physical or financial resources of his hostess, and true hospitality is never so absorbed in its own preparations as to forget that life has other claims.

Service is not contrasted with devotion ; provision for the supply of homely needs is not depreciated in comparison with prayer or Bible study. But we are reminded that we are responsible for our own choice of work, not for our neighbour's ; and the spirit that serves at the wrong time is compared with the spirit that recognises that there is a time to serve and a time to listen. The time to listen is when Jesus speaks. Even in the most solemn moment of our lives, are there not voices that break in and call us to service, it may be vain and meaningless service, almost before the Master has begun to speak ?

CHAPTER XI

Marriage and Divorce

IN connection with our Lord's teaching on womanhood, the subject of marriage and divorce has an important place. In discussing the question it is imperative to keep in mind our Lord's method of teaching. His instruction on institutions largely took the form of insight into the nature and meaning of these institutions. He made large demands on the intelligence of His disciples. He did not speak as a Professor of Law, or even of Ethics: His work was inspiration and illumination. He emphasised central and guiding principles and was not careful to point out exceptions and conditions which disciples who understood the nature of the institution they were discussing could find out for themselves.

In Deuteronomy xxiv. 1, a man is permitted to divorce his wife in prescribed form if he have found in her *some unseemly thing*. The precise meaning of this phrase was a favourite subject of dispute in the Rabbinic schools. The stricter school understood it to mean only adultery. The laxer school made it cover practically every form of domestic unhappiness, including bad cookery. The point was brought to Jesus as a test question.¹

¹ Mark 10¹⁻¹², cf. Matt. 19^{3ff}.

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Jesus asks His Pharisaic questioners to cease to look at the matter as a knotty point of law, suitable for the exercise of their skill in legal quibbles. He brings them out from the heated atmosphere of controversy into God's cool clear air, where they may think bigger and cleaner thoughts. He invites them to consider the meaning of marriage, the purpose for which it was instituted.

In human life as constituted by God there is a difference of sex which is fundamental, "from the beginning." There is the male nature and there is the female nature, each needing the other, each incomplete without the other. There must then be a union. Of all possible forms of union, what form is most in accordance with God's purpose for the world? In the only form of society which Jesus considers, the boy as he grows up finds himself a member of a family, in which father, mother, and children live together in an abiding union. When the family life has completed its work, or an important part of its work, in the training of the children, they are then free to leave the home, with a view to form other homes of the nature of that they have left. The man leaves his father and mother and forms a new relationship with his wife, of the same permanent nature as his relation to the father and mother he has left.

From Jesus' whole conception of manhood and womanhood we infer that in marriage as He pictures it the physical union is only the completion of the intellectual and moral comradeship which is its only

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sanction. Yet Jesus emphasises the physical union, and this is important. One may gain an appearance of spirituality by dwelling on the marriage relationship as a union of souls and ignoring its other aspects. But the loftiness of this view is only superficial. If the essence of the marriage relationship is a spiritual union, then where there is no spiritual union, or where the spiritual union which once existed exists no longer, there is no marriage.

But this is the teaching neither of Jesus nor of the facts of life, only of the sentimental novelist. It is part of the greatness of the apostle Paul that while his head is in the clouds his feet are always firmly planted on solid earth, not least when discussing this same subject. And this combination of idealism with recognition of fact is in the very spirit of his Master. Where husband and wife are not of one mind and one soul, there is no *Christian* marriage; but multitudes of people who are not Christians have to live their lives and make the best of them. The son in the far country is still a son, even though for the time he has no filial feeling; and husband and wife are still husband and wife, even though they have lost or never had that mutual love and respect without which marriage is little more than mating.

In our relations with non-Christians it is especially important to emphasise the distinction between marriage and Christian marriage. The former is concerned with status and is a matter of law. The latter is concerned with feeling and is in the region

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of the spirit. Of the many marriage problems which beset Christians in their relations with non-Christians, no solution can be considered Christian which is based on the assumption that a marriage which contradicts no fundamental law of human nature is no marriage because it was contracted under "heathen" rites.

The passage must be taken in close connection with the scene which follows, both in Mark and Matthew, in which Jesus blesses the children. The innocent children are introduced partly as a foil to the lustful Pharisees seeking facile divorce. Jesus reminds them that the real question is not divorce but marriage, the real problem not how to get rid of the relationship but how to make it the abiding, life-giving thing that God meant it to be. In the presence of the children we cannot forget that marriage brings its responsibilities, that children who have been brought up in a house with a man and woman are poor creatures compared with children who have been nurtured in a home with father and mother. We must make our marriage laws with our eyes on the children in the arms of Jesus. And He who championed the cause of all sufferers would not forget that women will always suffer more than men from facile divorce.

To the question about divorce, then, Jesus' answer is an exposition of the nature of marriage. Marriage is an institution, ordained by God in the very nature of His children, in which a man and woman, each the complement of the other, join in a permanent union

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to form a home. Some concern has been caused because in Mark's account Jesus seems to allow no possibility of divorce, while in Matthew He mentions adultery as a possible justification for divorce. It is highly probable that Mark's account is correct ; partly because it is earlier than Matthew's, but chiefly because it is more in accordance with Jesus' method of teaching to state the principle absolutely.

Having shown the nature of marriage, there was no need to specify that adultery gave solid ground for divorce. Where there is adultery the marriage tie in its essence is already broken. The sentence of divorce pronounced by the law-court is simply a legal recognition of an accomplished fact. The question whether other grounds than adultery can justify divorce or even make divorce a duty is not, as has so often been supposed, a question for the Biblical exegete, but for the Christian statesman. If there is one case where the sanctity of marriage can be upheld only by the severance of the marriage tie, there may be others. Jesus' teaching on marriage must be taken in conjunction with all His other teaching, with His abhorrence of cruelty to the weak, and with His whole attitude to women.

According to the teaching of Jesus marriage is a union ; but a juxtaposition in which the primary rights of one party are denied is not a union. This is not the place to discuss details of the subject, and we do not forget that the hardships of virtue are no argument for lenity to vice ; but we must beware of cruelty masquerading in the guise of orthodox

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exegesis. In writing to the Corinthian Church Paul quotes Jesus' declaration about the permanence of the marriage tie, but then proceeds to treat particular cases as a matter for discussion.*

Jesus, we repeat, came not to give law but to give light. We have from His lips no reasoned discussion of the question of divorce. But He made it abundantly clear that He conceived marriage as a permanent union between man and wife ; from which it is a reasonable inference that a law-court cannot divorce a man from his wife ; it can only give legal sanction to a divorce which has already taken place. Jesus emphasises the permanence of the marriage bond, not only by reminding us of the essential nature of the institution as a divine ordinance, but also by setting His face against one particular way of breaking it : the voluntary and deliberate putting away of a wife by her husband, especially the putting away of a wife with a view to marry another. A husband or a wife can no more dissolve an uncongenial partnership by divorce than a father can terminate his relationship to an unfilial son by disowning him. Marriage is not only a convenience but an education and a calling. Husband and wife have the duty of "saving" each other, saving each other for human love as well as for the love of God. In ill-considered marriages the task that one or both partners have thus unwittingly undertaken may seem hard ; but with Jesus the difficulty of a duty was never a reason for shirking it.

* I Cor. 7^{10ff.}

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Remarriage after a divorce due either to lust or cowardice Jesus does not hesitate to call by its proper name. A Christian partner in a marriage can under no circumstances break the marriage tie. Does that prevent him or her from recognising when it has already been effectively broken ?

Divorce which is of the nature of a major surgical operation is a violent remedy for an unhealthy condition of the social organism. We need surgeons to deal with our failures, but our hope for the future is in the science of preventive medicine. To imagine that when we have made stringent divorce laws we have done our whole duty by the teaching of Jesus on this subject is to make the old mistake of the legalist. If Jesus, interpreting the mind of God, declared marriage to be essentially a permanent institution, then it behoves all followers of Jesus to seek to suppress or transform all those features of our social or economic life which militate against the permanence of marriage.

There are marriages which for physical reasons ought not to take place at all. There has been in the past a social convention which made it difficult for a young man and woman to know each other without being committed to each other, a convention which has by no means lost all its power. Without being a convert to eugenics one may fairly doubt whether the almost absolutely irresponsible way in which marriage may be and is entered on in our country is best for the state or for the individual home. Drink is the foe of marriage as of every other

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beneficent institution. Economic systems and systems of housing which make decent and happy homes impossible or all but impossible must be reckoned among forces hostile to Christian marriage. But on this question, as on every other question connected with life, we are brought back to the fact that the problem is ultimately personal, that the most effective weapon of social reform is the bringing of the minds of men and women under the dominance of the Christian impulse.

In the discussion on marriage the Jews bring forward the permission of divorce by Moses, either spontaneously as in Matthew, or in reply to a question of Jesus as in Mark. Jesus points out that this permission was a concession to the "hardness of their hearts," a concession contrary to God's eternal purpose in the institution of marriage. There are two possibilities. It may be that Jesus is condemning Moses for weakly yielding a point he had no right to yield, and implying that all who had taken advantage of this concession of Moses were living in sin. But this would be contrary to Jesus' general attitude to Moses.

It is commonly said that in the fifth chapter of Matthew Jesus freely criticises Moses; but this is hardly correct. Rather He recognises the difference in function between Moses and Himself. Moses was legislating for a state. The state can take cognisance of acts and institutions, not of feelings and motives. The state can deal with murder but not with anger, with unchastity but not with unchaste

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thoughts, with breach of contract but not with lying. The state may say "Thou shalt not covet" or "Love your neighbour," but even a theocratic state has no power to enforce such legislation. But Jesus came to inspire with ideals the spiritual society of His followers. The law of Moses, like the law of a modern state, dealt not with marriage as a spiritual institution, but with its physical and legal aspects. No state can take cognisance of the presence or absence of love or congruity of tastes between husband and wife.

Further the state must legislate not only for people with ideals but for all its members, including those whose hearts are "hard." It must therefore often be content with compromise and second-best. It must wink at smaller evils to prevent grosser evils, as Moses sanctioned or was supposed to have sanctioned facile divorce to prevent indiscriminate vice. The state therefore must vary its demands according as the moral and intellectual condition of its citizens varies. Evils that have to be tolerated among a rough nomad people may be condemned in later and more cultured centuries.

Jesus then teaches that the permanence of the marriage relation is and always has been the ideal; but it seems a reasonable inference from His teaching taken as a whole: first, that cases may arise where the continuation of the marriage bond would be a desecration of marriage; and secondly, that this permanence is an ideal to be reached only gradually as civilisation and culture advance.

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This second point is important in the Mission work of the Church. It was no accident that Jesus was not given to the Jews at the time of Moses or till after they had come under the influence of Persian, Greek, and Roman culture. Till then they would not have been ready for the Christ. The Church in its Mission work is in contact with peoples at various stages of civilisation, some of them at a far more primitive stage than the Israelites of Moses' time. What is to take the place in their lives of the long period of preparation that God gave to the Israelites? Some tell us that the Ethiopian will never change his skin. Others expect heathen people to leap at one bound a gulf as broad as that for the crossing of which God allowed the Israelites many centuries. In the Christian realm an unbalanced faith is always more likely to be near the truth of things than an unrelieved pessimism; however the latter may build on experience; but the educative and saving power of Jesus on backward peoples will be most effectively exercised through His Church, when the Church combines infinite patience, sympathy and forgiving love, with the unfailing presentation of Christian ideals enforced by Christian discipline, and with a faith and hope that expect miracles.

If any disappointment is felt that Jesus in His teaching on marriage does not reach even higher levels, we have to note that He is not speaking of specifically Christian marriage. He is speaking to Pharisees, and presenting the Divine purpose in marriage in so far as it can be applied and enforced

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in all states that have reached the intellectual and moral level of the Jews of that period. It is true that similar teaching is given in what is called the "Sermon on the Mount," which is addressed to "the disciples,"¹ but this is presumably the same saying which Matthew after his wont has included in a congruous collection of sayings. This is especially obvious in Luke's Gospel where the dictum on adultery, in spite of the valiant attempts made to connect it with the context, is simply an isolated utterance.² But Dr. Newman Smyth is only adding a corollary to the teaching of Jesus when he says that "married life reaches towards its supreme perfection when one Christian faith and hope become the spirit and the law of a human home."³

Jesus teaches then that the nature of man or woman apart from marriage remains incomplete; the celibate life is essentially the immature life. In Matthew's account after the discussion on divorce there is a short passage on celibacy⁴; but the section reads so awkwardly in the connection in which Matthew gives it that it is perhaps safe to assume we have lost the context and there is no corresponding section in Mark or Luke.

In this section Jesus reminds the disciples that although marriage is a Divine ordinance it is not always practicable: there may be barriers of three kinds. Some are disqualified by considerations of health. Others are prevented from marrying "by

¹ Matt. 53¹.

² Luke 16¹⁸.

³ "Christian Ethics," p. 407.

⁴ Matt. 19^{10ff}.

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men," for example by rates of wages that make Christian marriage impossible, or by the failure of the responsible authorities to provide a sufficient supply of suitable houses. In other circles the most potent influence hostile to marriage is the absurdly high "standard of living," which has sometimes been ascribed to the "race for pleasure," but might be more justly attributed to a restless craving to be doing something expensive combined with fear of ostracism from the caste. So long as competition in dress and entertainments, a large establishment, and costly amusements are the hall-mark of our Brahmins, so long will wealthy men tell us quite sincerely that they are too poor to marry. Neither sex can afford to lay the blame on the other ; but in so far as women are responsible for the orgies of extravagance, they make their sisters pay a heavy price.

A third class voluntarily deprive themselves of marriage "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," the better to fulfil their duty to parents or relatives who need them, or to devote themselves more wholeheartedly and unreservedly to religious or philanthropic work, to art or science. Such people have not entered a state higher than the marriage state. They have recognised that the many-sided development of their own individual lives is not for them the highest good : they have plucked out an eye that others may see, cut off a hand that others may be strong to work.

The home as Jesus pictures it is a home in which

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there are children. "Let the children come to Me;"¹ but how can they come if they do not exist? "Do not prevent them"²: but we *have* prevented them. The laughter of God is the laughter of bitter irony. For a generation the nations in the van of progress have watched their homes becoming fewer and fewer, those that existed becoming emptier and emptier, and men and women rejoiced in their new found liberty and independence and prosperity. And then, not as in Noah's time when they were marrying and being married, but when they were refusing to marry or to accept the obligations of marriage, the deluge came. In hot haste they searched the high-ways and by-ways for men, and still more men, for the men whose non-existence was a triumph of the new and popular school of economics.

If the neo-Malthusian will not allow the Psalmist's claim that "the man who has filled his quiver full of sons" is "happy,"³ he must at least grant that he has one advantage:

"He shall not be ashamed when he speaks
With enemies in the gate."³

With his strong sons behind him his word will have weight. Small nations have played big parts in the history of the world; but a nation which has *chosen* to be small can only wait and see how God deals with the policy.

Imprudent marriages and imprudence in marriage have caused untold misery; but if our reading of

¹ Mark 10¹⁴.

² Ps. 127⁵.

³ Ps. 127⁵.

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the Gospels is correct, economy must take a very humble place among the Christian virtues.

“ One man is generous, yet grows ever richer ;
Another is mean, yet he only grows poorer.”¹

For one who loves children, tries to look at them with the eyes of Jesus, feels his nature unfold under their influence, who will work out a profit and loss account ? Work, care, anxiety, sleeplessness, expenditure, shall we put them all down on the debit side ? Neo-Malthusianism, like most moral products, is a mixed growth. In some measure it is due to a genuine desire that children should have a happy childhood and should enter life with the best equipment the parents can afford. In so far as this is its origin, its value is a question of fact : the question namely whether in experience the physical, intellectual, and moral worth and the happiness of children is in inverse proportion to the size of the family ; and whether the value of the different forms of culture is in proportion to the money spent on them. In part it is a recognition of the fact that the wife and mother is also a woman with her own life to live and the worth of her judgment will depend on the extent to which she has been trained, and is willing, to give to all the elements in life their Christian values.

But if our forefathers took somewhat too literally the precept to “ give no thought to the morrow,” our temptation is to give too much thought to the

¹ Proverbs 11²⁴.

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day. The new economic doctrine is ultimately a new way of looking at life, a new determination to get the most out of life, a change in the spiritual centre of gravity. The new spirit does not abjure self-sacrifice, but is convinced that previous generations bore many burdens and imposed many burdens on others that God never meant them to bear, and carefully scrutinises the claims of every cross before it shoulders it. How far is the new spirit Christian?

CHAPTER XII

The Full Life or the Empty Life ?

FOR thousands of years philosophers have tried to find some formula which will cover the end towards which the moral life ought to be developed. In spite of our own experience, we are apt to forget that the moral aims men profess to follow are at best but ideals to which in their practical lives they approximate more or less closely ; that while most men are worse than their creed, many men are better than their creed ; and that not infrequently the spectator can see no relation between the life a man actually lives and the scheme of life he thinks he is following. In theory most of us belong to some ethical "school." In practice we find room in the guidance of our lives for the ideals of more than one school.

One would have supposed that whatever differences there might be on other aspects of Christian truth or conduct, there would at least be unanimity on the moral end of the Christian life : but in fact the Christian Church has room even now for two ideals which at first sight seem contradictory of each other. Asceticism, which for centuries dominated the minds if not of Christians at least of the professionals of the Church, still remains a living ideal ; to many

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Christianity is still the pursuit of the empty life. The devotees of this school are suspicious of pleasure, have no interest in the cultivation of faculties for its own sake, and regard the world as on the whole an enemy to be feared. They glory in renunciation, and measure their progress in the Christian race by their success in emptying life of every interest not in the narrow sense spiritual.

But in our generation even among loyal followers of Jesus, there has been an increasing demand for the full life. With a human life so rich in potentialities, a world so varied in its capacity to satisfy our desires and give scope for the exercise of our powers, why should we, men are asking, place an impassable gulf between them ? What God hath joined together let not man put asunder. God has made His world and man's life for each other ; why should we think we honour God by divorcing them ? Surely our eyes were given us for some better purpose than to pluck them out, our hands for some nobler end than to be cut off ! there is an increasing suspicion that the old insistent demand for self-sacrifice is but a refined form of devil worship, that the God whom the mediæval Christian worshipped was one who loved to see His worshippers grinning with pain.

It would be grossly unfair to apply the term materialistic to the scheme of life which finds Greek ideals not incompatible with devotion to Jesus. A large section of the Church during the last century has shown generous hospitality to wide culture,

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and even to a certain amount of Hedonism ; yet the same period has been marked by an all but unexampled outburst of missionary activity and a rapid growth of the leavening power of Christianity in the social and political life.

Nor is the revolt against asceticism essentially selfish or self-centred. It is organically connected with the growth in the last century and a half of physical science and invention with our new knowledge of and control over the forces of nature. We have learned that the world is a far richer place than our forefathers supposed it to be ; that in it are multitudinous secrets concealed from the foundation of the world, only waiting for men to fathom them, unmeasured powers waiting for men to harness them, infinite sources of refined enjoyment for those who will take the trouble to appreciate them. Our marvellous century has taught us that the motto of the world is : The asker receives ; the seeker finds ; to the knocker the door opens. The workman of to-day has in many respects a far more comfortable and refined and a far fuller life than the magnate of some centuries back.

And not only is the world a better place to live in but man himself is a far bigger creature than he used to consider himself, wielding for the first time with the authority of conscious power the sceptre of his dominion over the world and all that is in the world, and with hints in his nature of whole regions as yet uncharted.

All this was bound to influence our conception

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of the end of the moral life. It was all very well to despise a world which seemed despicable, a dreary poor inhospitable abode; not inaptly compared to the desert of Israelitish wanderings. When man, not half conscious of himself, found himself living in a world he did not understand, but which seemed to be largely controlled by unknown powers that were hostile to him, there was little wonder that he concentrated his hopes on another life than this. But with our new knowledge of and mastery over the world, and our new conception of man, all that is changed ; and it is not strange that many are finding life abundantly worth living and cultivating faculties that seem abundantly worth cultivating. It is their creed that the land of Bondage is itself the land of Promise, to be reached not by wandering through a desert but by turning their task masters into bond servants.

The goals of what we have called the full life and the empty life do not, except in a minor degree, represent two classes of Christians. Rather they represent ideals which most of us manage to combine in our lives in a way which puzzles ourselves at times as much as it puzzles others. There are some who frankly strive to meet life at all points and regard self-sacrifice as an uncomfortable doctrine of which too much has been made. Others try more or less successfully to suppress themselves in the service of others. But for most of us the moral life is a succession of balancing feats on a tight rope stretched between the two extremes, with our faces now towards this goal, now towards that ; and to many the

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ascetic element in their Christianity makes itself felt not so much in any direct effect on their conduct, as in a vague sense of dissatisfaction ; a feeling that they are happier than pious people have any right to be ; perhaps even a certain relief that they can call themselves " miserable offenders " with a clear conscience.

The two types of life may be roughly illustrated by the different ideals which bodies like the Salvation Army on the one side and most churches on the other have for their official representatives. A clergyman may not always be able to make his home a model of hospitality and a centre of intellectual and aesthetic culture as well as of spiritual influence, but that is the standard his people set up for him. A preacher who took the Baptist as his model might find his sphere as an itinerant evangelist, but would have difficulty in " taking orders " or " getting a call."

The ambiguity and puzzled uncertainty of aim that are so common to-day are a reflex of the existence in New Testament teaching of two elements which at first seem irreconcilable. On the one hand we have the cross as the universally recognised symbol of Christianity. The Gospel of the Kingdom from the first involved renunciation : Simon and Andrew left their work when Jesus called them,¹ James and John left their father and their work.² The Gospel call is a call to pluck out a right eye,³ to sell our possessions,⁴ to abandon the most pressing domestic duties,⁵

¹ Mark 1¹⁸.

² Mark 1²⁰.

³ Matt. 5²⁹.

⁴ Luke 12³⁵.

⁵ Luke 9^{59ff}.

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to break the dearest family ties,¹ to face pain and shame and death.² Jesus had sometimes no place to lay His head.³

But over against all this is a quite different attitude to life. Jesus attends feasts,⁴ is a guest at a wedding,⁵ has joyous intercourse with men. His Gospel is "new wine,"⁶ the Kingdom is a wedding feast,⁷ He fears to meet no man or woman: the touch of the unclean defiled the Pharisee; the touch of Jesus made the unclean clean.⁸ He found the Sabbath a burden; He changed it into a day of rest and glad worship. The men of Israel trying to keep the law imposed by their priests suggested to Jesus a yoke of bullocks stumbling along with hatred in their hearts under a crushing load. The followers of Jesus are also called to take the yoke, but they pull with all their hearts a burden that seems light, because the Master who guides them is one who loves them and whom they love.⁹ Most significant of all, Jesus deliberately contrasts His own way of life with the asceticism of the Baptist. His readiness to enjoy life's good things had given, He tells us, a handle to His enemies, who accused Him of gluttony and drunkenness.¹⁰

The instructions to the twelve¹¹ and to the seventy¹² for their missionary tours have sometimes been understood in an ascetic sense, but perhaps with insufficient

¹ Luke 14²⁶.

⁴ Mark 2¹⁵; Luke 7³⁶.

⁷ Matt. 22².

¹⁰ Matt 11^{18f}.

² Mark 8^{34ff}.

⁵ John 2².

⁸ Mark 14^{1f}.

¹¹ Matt. 10.

³ Luke 9⁵⁸.

⁶ Mark 2²².

⁹ Matt. 11^{28ff}.

¹² Luke 10.

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reason. They seem rather to be intended to inculcate, in part faith, in part haste. There may be an intentional contrast with the greedy and comfort-loving Scribes and Pharisees ; but the main purport of the instructions seems to be that the disciples are to avoid the two extremes of a faithless independence and a cringing beggary. They are to go among the villages of Galilee as men who bring something that is worth having, and are to fare at least as well as the people among whom they are working.

It is an easy, but for our day not a very profitable task to expose the weakness of asceticism. Its philosophy of life is wrong : it is Christian teaching that the world is not Satan's world but God's world. Sin is usually associated with pleasure of some kind, but it is a confusion of thought to suppose that the pleasure is itself sinful ; rather pleasure is a God-given concomitant of all healthy activity. Even if flight from temptation is sometimes the truest courage, for many it is not a possible means of escape ; and those lose the stimulus they might have from a victorious struggle.

The ascetic sets himself an impossible task, for his chief enemy is within the gates. We abandon our money only to find that we have retained our greed. Desire does not disappear with the means of satisfying it. We conquer our ambition to be famous for our " secular " achievements, and find, or perhaps more often we do not find, that we cherish the desire to be famous for our piety. The very means

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we take to reach our end is the most effective guarantee that we shall never reach it. Desire never speaks so loudly as when we suppress it. The man whose life resolves itself into an overmastering passion for a draught of water is not the peasant whose home is by the running stream, but the lost traveller in the desert. Even if the ascetic could ever reach his goal, it is a poor ambition. Better to enter into life maimed or lame or one-eyed than with the full tally of eyes and limbs to lose life altogether ; but better still, every organ sound, every faculty developed, to enter into life.

The ascetic fears the world, the Christian fears only himself. With the seductions of the world in full view, knowing all the lust and littleness and cruelty of men, Jesus bids His followers go into all the world. The ascetic asks what harm the world can do to him : the Christian asks what good he can do to the world.

It is all true ; and yet asceticism, even when it savours of absurdity, always makes its appeal. A Laodicean world will always pay a tribute of respect to earnestness, however unenlightened. There is a Satan in each of us that is sceptical of a piety that leads to " seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five-hundred she-asses, and a vast train of servants," and which is consistent with being " the richest man in all the East." The teacher whose religion is manifestly costing him something is the teacher who will have disciples. When Jesus was analysing the spell

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which the Baptist cast over the men of his day, He traced it in part to his coarse food and clothing and his desert life.¹

Jesus went to feasts: but the Gospel writers never mention this as a fact of interest in itself. The feast was always a background for some incident that illumines Jesus or His message. Among the most eloquent passages in Paul's letters are those which describe His sufferings for the sake of the Gospel. And when men hold up before us an Hellenic gospel of culture and full self-development as the truth of Christianity, we do not forget that when the time came Jesus died on the cross.

We are sometimes told that Jesus ignored the richness and variety of life, that His concentration on religion as the only worthy object of interest is narrow and paralysing. The criticism is well taken if we grant the underlying assumption that religion is but one among many objects of human pursuit, intended mainly for those who have a natural bent in that direction. But to Jesus religion is the sap of the tree of life, not one of its branches. If Jesus did not legislate for our moral lives, it was hardly to be expected that He would prescribe codes for our aesthetic, our intellectual, our industrial lives.

But Jesus has that absolute conviction that the world is one, which is the fundamental presupposition of all science. He has the scientist's keen interest in man and man's mind, in the world

¹ Matt. 117th.

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and its orderliness; the artist's joy in its unending beauty; the philosopher's conviction that there is a meaning and purpose in it all, when we penetrate the outer show and get down to the reality; his assurance that nature will speak if we ask her questions and listen for the answer.

It is open to anyone to deny that Jesus read life aright, to refuse to follow Him when He sees the divine heart of love in the glorious colours of the lily, the hand of God in the giving or withholding of sunshine or shower; and when He reads history as the gradual unfolding of God's purpose. This at least is beyond cavil, that to see life and the world as Jesus saw them is to have the noblest of all incentives to study them in every phase. The intellectual and aesthetic history of Europe is the effective answer to those who find in the Christian Gospel the barrenness of an abstract spirituality.

CHAPTER XIII

Pain

IF it is misleading to picture Jesus' ideal for men as the closest possible approximation to the condition of disembodied spirits, it leads us even further from the truth to ignore the large place He gives to suffering in His teaching. The meaning of pain has troubled men's minds since first they began to consider life's problems. Among the deepest convictions of the Israelite was that the righteous man is "like to a tree, planted by runlets of water" ¹; that the "wicked" are "like chaff," "driven by the wind." ² Suffering is the fruit of sin.

But the Israelite could not conceal from himself that often it is the wicked man that is like a tree planted by a runlet of water. He has his answer ready: it will all become clear when we have "entered the holy world of God and considered their latter end." ³ But their latter end is often a creditable demise among sorrowing relatives, an imposing funeral, a eulogistic obituary, and a flattering tombstone. "Wait a little longer" said the Israelite. "He has escaped, but his son will bear the penalty." "Rabbi, why was this man born blind,

¹ Ps. 13.

² Ps. 14.

³ Ps. 73¹⁷.

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for his own sin or his parents' ? " Sin must bring suffering in its train ; suffering must be the outcome of sin. And the Hindu agrees : if Job is really as righteous in this world as he thinks he is, then he must have had a black record in his previous existence or he would never have known such agonies in this.

In part all this is a natural confusion of thought : sin leads to suffering, therefore suffering is due to sin. In part it is too " optimistic," if one may use the expression. It assumes that the will of God is not only the controlling but the only will in the universe. It leaves no place for " evil spirits," nor for the hostile will of man. Nor does it make allowance for that " twist " in nature that corresponds to the " crook " in man's nature which tries to thwart the will of God ; for the subtle harmony of nature and man is among the deepest convictions of Scripture writers. The ground is " cursed " for the sake of man.² " The entire creation sighs and throbs with pain " ³ in unison with the throes of man's agonised efforts after a higher life ; and the redemption of nature will synchronise with the ultimate redemption of man. The Jew and the Hindu forget that to run counter to this element in life that is hostile to God will bring pain, as well as to withstand God Himself. Blessed they who are persecuted for their goodness.

But in the essence of his conviction the Jew was right : if the world is God's world and man is God's

¹ John 9². ² Gen. 3⁷. ³ Romans 8²², Dr. Moffatt's translation.

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child, ultimately there must be harmony between man's spirit and its environment. Ultimately; yet they are separable and for a time they may diverge; for a time they *must* diverge. If the "runlet of water" that runs through the garden of the good man never failed, then religion would simply be prudence. When Satan is allowed to strip Job, it is not only to convince of his sincerity that sceptic in man that the author calls Satan, not only to convince God, but ultimately to convince Job himself. As long as he is a prosperous and popular sheikh, not even he himself can tell for certain whether his faith in God is a graceful ornament to an abounding material prosperity, or whether it is the foundation of his being.

Jesus has several things to tell us about suffering: this among other things, that suffering tests us. Sometimes God lets the rain come down, floods arise and winds blow, on the whole structure of our life, to let us see whether our trust in God is part of us, or whether it is only an accident of our material prosperity and will fall with its fall.¹

Nothing more shakes men's faith in a guiding Providence than the seemingly reckless and useless suffering and waste of life involved in catastrophes of "nature." Men still challenge God as they challenged His Son with the question: To what purpose is this waste?² One of the many surprises of the Gospels is the way in which Jesus deals with this subject. Eighteen men have been killed by the

¹ Matt. 7²⁴ff.

² Matt. 26⁸.

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fall of a tower in Siloam. How will Jesus deal with this situation?¹

We expect Him to express sympathy with the relatives of the victims, to inspire His interlocutors with loftier views of death, to reason with them and explain how such happenings are not inconsistent with a good God whose power is unlimited. He does none of these things. "Do you suppose they were sinners beyond all men who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But if you do not repent, all of you will perish in the same way." It seems harsh; we are repelled: but we read the passage again.

The men to whom Jesus is speaking are not relatives of the victims; they are in no need of consolation. Nor are they men whose faith in Providence has received a staggering blow; they believe in God's guidance as much as ever they did. They are self-righteous men, puffed up with pride at their own immunity from misfortune, testifying as they think it does to their spotless innocence, gloating over the wickedness which alone could have induced God to send these eighteen men to destruction. Jesus sees in them that same self-righteous, blind, contemptuous Pharisaism that is hurling the nation to its doom. He calls on them to see in the fate of the eighteen men lying crushed under the tower a type of the fate that awaits them and their compatriots if they do not turn. Suffering then may be a solemn warning of God to others, though it can never be only that.

¹ Luke 13¹⁻⁵.

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It is characteristic that Jesus hardly refers at all to the book of Job. The problem of the book was for Him no problem. His faith in God was not a faith that triumphed over the facts of life that lead to scepticism. It was trust in a Father with whom He had unbroken communion, to doubt whom would be to doubt Himself. Is it not partly because we judge God from the outside, as dispassionate albeit at times friendly critics, rather than from the intimacy of personal communion, that the cries of Job's wrestling strike so familiarly on our ears and come home to us with such power?

In two respects Jesus' attitude to pain differs fundamentally from the attitude of much Old Testament writing, culminating in the book of Job. Job's problem was his own pain: why such a fine man as himself should not be allowed to continue in undisturbed possession of his estate, his good health, and his domestic bliss. But the suffering that wrings the heart and makes the foundations of our faith to quiver is the pain before which philosophy is dumb; the pain that strikes so harshly on our sense of chivalry, of which the victims are not merely innocent but helpless, weak women, crushed invalids, tortured children.

On this subject Jesus does not reason with us; the cleverest arguments would leave us cold. But He makes us feel that our pity for all that is weak and suffering is but a dim reflex of the pity in the heart of God. He shows us God, not standing outside sorrows like these in indifference, not even in

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pity, but so sharing our life that all our pain is His pain. God, in the person of His Servant, "carries the burden of our sicknesses and pains."¹ He seizes the spear-points that threaten His weakest brethren, and points them towards His own bosom. "So far as you have done it, so far as you have not done it, to one of these brothers of Mine, however humble, you have done it, you have not done it, to Me."²

But although Jesus does not quote Job, we cannot assume He had not studied the book. The fall of the tower at Siloam reminds us that one of the bitterest of Job's experiences was the loss all in a moment of his sons and daughters by the collapse of the house in which they were feasting; and passages in the teaching of Jesus seem to be in almost pointed contrast to the experiences that Job found it so hard to understand. This is part of Jesus' contribution to the solution of the problem of suffering. He invites His followers voluntarily to strip themselves as Job was stripped against his will, and to the bewilderment of his faith. Naked we came forth from God, and the wrappings that shut out from us life's cold and pain are apt to shut out God from us. The things Job prized are good, but we may pay too high a price for them. When Job was robbed of them he wrestled with God: Jesus calls on us to rejoice when we have robbed ourselves of them.³ Job's life was spared: Jesus would not have us count even our lives dear.⁴

¹ See Matt. 8:17.

² Matt. 25:40, 45.

³ Mark 10:29f.

⁴ Matt. 10:33

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It is a shallow criticism that tells us the morality of Jesus has been superseded because His highest ideal for men was that they should love their neighbours as themselves, whereas there are many now in whose minds their neighbours' welfare bulks far more largely than their own. Jesus accepted as embodying the whole law of God the two Old Testament commands: Love God, and Love your neighbour as yourself.¹ We have to go to Calvary to see the interpretation He put on them.

Yet to represent the religion of Jesus as the worship of sorrow is to subvert Jesus' whole conception of the place of sorrow in life. "Sorrow for sorrow's sake" is a formula which for Him would have had no meaning. In His mind the crucifixion was only one side of an experience of which the other side was the Resurrection.² Sorrow as such has no place in the Christian life, but only sorrow that mellows into a deeper and a lasting joy. The true symbol of Christianity is not the cross but the cross surmounted by a crown. "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more"³; this is not the dream of a war-weary soul that has forgotten the goal set before it. It is a vision that breathes the very spirit in which Jesus lived His earthly life.

Luke 10:28.

² Mark 8:31.

³ Rev. 21:4.

CHAPTER XIV

Bearing the Cross

IF we were asked to find a formula that covered Jesus' conception of the moral life, perhaps most of us would point to one of that group of sayings of which we may take as typical Matthew xvi. 24 :—
"If anyone wants to follow Me, let him efface himself, and lift his cross. Then let him follow Me." The first apostles were called to a literal following. For them it involved leaving everything that had up till then made their life, going wherever Jesus went, listening to His teaching, watching His miracles, studying His life, imbibing His spirit. To-day we follow Jesus not with our feet but with our hearts. To go behind Him to-day does not imply living some new kind of life, adopting some new kind of work, leaving the old home. It means transforming the old life, doing the old work in a new spirit, turning the old home into a new home.

The phrase "Follow Me" must have had both these meanings even in the earthly ministry of Jesus. A large band of literal followers would soon have become unwieldy and would have foiled the very purpose for which He chose apostles. His invitation was frequently not to join the apostle circle but to

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live the Christ-like life. We readily grant that the cross we are asked to shoulder is a spiritual cross ; we find it much more difficult to realise that the following to which we are invited is a purely spiritual following which has nothing in common with an external imitation.

We constantly ask : " What did Jesus do ? " and " What did His apostles do ? " with the underlying assumption that if we do what they did it will be counted to us for righteousness. Is not this to adopt the position against which the ministry of Jesus was one long protest ? In particular in all ecclesiastical matters, instead of facing the problems of our day in the spirit in which the apostles faced the very different problems of their day, we ask : What did the apostles and Church fathers do and what did they say ? We constantly forget that quotations without the historical context are as misleading as quotations without the literary context.

Brought face to face with the question whether the Church of Jesus Christ is the one sphere of human activity in which women are for ever to remain subordinates, we ask : " What does the Book of Genesis say ? " Or, " What was the practice of the early Church ? " Nor are we always quite impartial in our study of the records. We sometimes emphasise the passages in which Paul the Christian had not yet finally delivered himself from Saul the Pharisee, and forget the great emancipating word in Galatians iii. 28. We often discuss such matters

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as if we had never read what David did.¹ What David did was to create a new precedent, to subordinate the letter of the law to the spirit.

A literal following of Jesus may not always be even possible. Did Jesus never tread regions where we have no right to follow Him? He told men not to judge,² yet He judged the Pharisees and He judged Herod. May we follow Him there, or do our want of insight and our impurity for ever disqualify us as judges? He worked miracles. It would be very depressing to think that it is only want of faith that hinders us from working miracles, nor does there seem any sufficient reason to believe so. He went voluntarily to His death when He might have saved Himself. Are we never to defend ourselves from peril, not even by flight? Even when we do the things that He did, coming from us they are not the same. If we follow Him to death, the death that we die is not the death that He died.

Jesus assumes that here as always we interpret His words intelligently. But there are two aspects of His life of such transcendent importance that on these points He will leave us in no uncertainty. Whatever else following involves or does not involve, it includes saying "No" to ourselves and taking up our cross.

This last phrase has been rightly accepted universally as the characteristic motto of the Christian, but is it always used in its natural sense? Whether the phrase was even then proverbial for self-sacrifice,

¹ Mark 2²⁵.

² Matt. 7¹.

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or whether Jesus coined the phrase in this sense, at least His hearers would at once grasp its significance. The Jews were only too familiar with crucifixion as a form of execution. In addition to the thieves and other criminals who were thus put to death, hundreds of rebels had been crucified by the Roman Government. It was the cruel custom of the time to make the victim carry his cross or part of his cross from the prison to the place of execution ; and so we catch the idea in Jesus' mind.

To carry the cross is not the same thing as to be crucified. The cross-bearer has been condemned and is on the way to execution ; but he may still be full of vitality, every faculty sound, every capacity unimpaired. Yet though living he has so to speak turned his back on life ; his face is towards death. He has the same capacity for work and enjoyment as other men ; but the things that interest other men, the things that a little while ago interested him, have lost all their interest. While in the world, he is in a very real sense not of the world. He is moving towards torture, public shame and death. The cross on his shoulder is a perpetual reminder that while still alive and hale, he is dead to life's ordinary aims, activities, and pleasures.

There is no other phrase that indicates so well the Christian attitude to life. We are not necessarily called on to surrender life or health or even happiness, to give up our work or the enjoyment of our faculties, to leave our homes or sever our family ties ; but we are expected to be prepared to do any of these things

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when the call comes. Our Lord does not ask us to live on a cross: He does command us to live with the cross on our shoulder, ready to make the great sacrifice when He so wills it.

The decision to follow Jesus does not necessarily strip us of anything that we prize. Rather the joy of being alive in a world where the sun shines and birds sing and leaves are green, the glow of healthful activity, life's simple pleasures, the gladness of human love and sympathy, are enriched and purified when we receive them as gifts from God through His Son Jesus Christ. But they are no longer to us the supreme things in life. In the midst of our highest and purest pleasures we bear the cross that comes of the knowledge that at any time we may hear our Lord call us to sell all our prized possessions and go forth on some duty of work or suffering. Even in peacetime we honour the calling of the soldier. Many a soldier goes through the whole of his military career without ever once hearing a shot fired in anger; yet from the first day he dons the King's uniform he has taken up his cross. The call to surrender his life may never come to him, but when it does come it will find him ready.

All through the Gospel story the call of Jesus was coming to this one and to that one. It was not always the same call. Some were called on to leave everything and adopt a new vocation.¹ Others were only asked to give up their money or their evil life, their popularity or their comfort. There were

¹ Mark 116ff. 1021.

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many fishermen in Galilee ; many of them no doubt were numbered among His disciples : but only to Peter and Andrew, James and John, did the call come to leave all and follow Him. There were many tax-gatherers in Judæa and in Galilee ; crowds of them heard Jesus gladly and repented and believed. But only to Levi did the call come to forsake the custom-house and join the apostle band.¹ Zacchæus the tax-gatherer also became a Christian, but he was not asked to leave his work.² He only stopped cheating and became just and generous. Would Jesus have made the demand He did from the wealthy ruler, if He had not wanted him for an apostle ?

The Christian call which, judged superficially, seems to stamp Christianity as a religion of sorrow and meaningless self-renunciation, is really its tribute to the worth of life. Jesus does not depreciate any of the good things of life ; His followers are not called on to depreciate them. If at any time it becomes our duty to renounce home or work or money or health or life, it is not because these things are not good, but only because at the time they are not the best for us.

Our Lord knew well from His own experience that the sacrificial knife He places in our hands would often cut deep. Our right hand and our right eye are among God's best gifts to us ; He would not have us say one slighting word of them. There is only one voice at whose bidding we shall surrender them,

¹ Matt. 9².

² Luke 19^{aff}.

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only one claim that we recognise as superior to the claim of cherishing them.

This explains also the otherwise puzzling fact that the things we prize most in life, some of them sources of our purest pleasures and fountains of our spiritual life, are constantly held before us in the Gospels not as blessings but as temptations. Their capacity to call forth our love is the measure of their power to hurt; and the nobler the element in our nature to which they appeal, the subtler the temptation. When the pearl merchant has found his queen of pearls, the other pearls that have rewarded his search are still pearls and no less precious than before.¹ Only if one of them has so cast its spell over him that he is blind to the sparkling glories of the queen pearl, does God's good gift become a stumbling-block.

¹ Matt. 13⁴⁵.

CHAPTER XV

An Emergency Code ?

IF one set of Jesus' characteristic maxims reminded His disciples that He whom they followed "went forth, carrying His cross," another emphasised the complementary truth that they were followers of a King about to enter on His dominion. Much of Jesus' teaching centres round the idea of the Kingdom of God, and many would make the conception the key to all He did and said.

When we ask what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God we are surprised to find that He nowhere defines the phrase. We turn to the group of parables collected by Matthew in his thirteenth and by Mark in his fourth chapter ; we find much light cast on various questions connected with the Kingdom, but no answer to the question, What *is* the Kingdom ?

For this silence the reasons are not far to seek. Even if the phrase had been quite new, the picture it would suggest of a body of people who loyally acknowledged and served God as their King, and among whom God's will in all things prevailed, would be sufficiently near the truth. But the conception of a kingdom of God was one with which the Jews had long been familiar. In early times they believed that

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God was both their ruler and their law-giver, and even under the monarchy the King was simply the vice-gerent of God. But a theocratic state like all other states found that there is a powerful element in life that aims at thwarting the will of God, and no conceivable optimism could imagine that the condition of the Jewish state even under its best kings represented the will of God for man.

Thus there arose not merely a longing for the more effective intervention of God in His world but a conviction that some day God would send a King who would worthily represent Him ; under whose sway God's will would be done on earth ; and all sorrow, oppression, and unrighteousness would cease.

But the final reason why the meaning of the " Kingdom of God " is not explained anywhere is just that it is explained everywhere. To find Jesus' conception of the Kingdom we have to study all that He did and said, His death and His resurrection. He who demands that we follow Him bearing our cross claims to be King of the long-delayed Kingdom of God, and invites us to enjoy the privileges and undertake the duties of membership in the Kingdom.

So far there is no difficulty ; but later Jewish writers had not been content with the comparatively simple pictures of the new age that they found in the great prophets. They proceeded to elaborate them ; and in particular they introduced the conception that the new era will not be the final stage of a long pro-

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cess of development, but will be ushered in by a direct intervention of God with catastrophic suddenness, an intervention that will take the form of a vast upheaval of nature and man's life. There is no doubt that Jesus made considerable use of these conceptions, especially in the great " eschatological " discourse in Mark xiii.

In our generation attempts have been made to show that this conviction—that the Kingdom of God, not in germ nor as a process of growth but as a completed organisation, was about to burst into the life of the world by a miraculous interposition of God—dominated the whole of the thought of Jesus. The particular interest of this theory for us is the assumption with which it is accompanied: that the enquiry on which we are engaged, and all similar enquiries, are futile. The answer to the question: What has Jesus to tell us about life? will then be: He has nothing to tell us about life, about life as we know it.

If the theory is correct, then the directions that Jesus gave to His followers for the guidance of their lives were of no permanent value. They were simply an "emergency code" meant to tide them over the short interval that would elapse before the coming of the "last things." If the whole world-order is on the verge of collapse then life's ordinary activities lose their meaning: art, industry, politics, pleasure, are but snares that would prevent us from preparing ourselves to be ready for the coming of the Kingdom; earthly possessions, even family ties, are entangle-

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ments ; health, happiness, life itself, must be subordinated to the supreme duty of keeping our lamps bright for the coming of the bridegroom. Thus is the ascetic element in the Gospels explained.

The first criticism of this theory that strikes one is that, if it is a true interpretation of Jesus' attitude to life, it is beyond all measure surprising that we should have had to wait till now for the discovery. Granted that now for the first time we know the literary antecedents of some of the imagery that Jesus used ; granted also that each new generation finds something in Jesus that was concealed from its predecessors : yet in a book which for nearly two thousand years has been studied with scholarly and loving care we do not expect to make revolutionary discoveries. If the Kingdom as Jesus pictured it was not primarily a spiritual organisation governed by spiritual laws, then we know nothing of it.

Moreover, if Jesus' insistent and almost harsh demands for self-sacrifice had in view simply the imminent doom of the era, it is surprising that this has left so little trace in His utterances. When Paul writing to the Corinthians discusses the question of celibacy, he gives the advice he thinks good in view of " the present distress,"¹ that is, in view of the return of Christ which he believed to be imminent. But when Jesus discusses the marriage question, there is no hint that His words are not intended to be of permanent value. When He dissuades His disciples from piling up stores of costly garments and other

¹ 1 Cor. 7²⁶.

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treasures in their storehouses, His argument is not that earthly treasures are the notes of a bank which is about to default ; but that even if they escape the clutches of the housebreaker, they will gradually waste away under those combined influences that we call "time."¹ The treasure of one who lives this life in an eternal spirit must be impervious to the ravages of time. If disciples are not to worry about food and drink and clothing, the reason is not that they are about to enter a realm where the science of economics has no meaning, but that their Heavenly Father knows all about their material wants.²

Is it not also too readily assumed by exponents of this school that the morality which is to avail for a limited period is fundamentally different from the morality which would be suitable in normal circumstances ? We shall not enquire what a moral philosopher would think about this : what does the ordinary man think about it ? When a man is told by his doctor that his heart is radically unsound, he may make his will ; but he will not proceed to stand on his head and reverse all the laws by which his life has been previously guided. His life may so pursue its normal course that even his own friends do not know he is under sentence of death ; and whether in this his conduct is admirable or otherwise depends entirely on the nature of the life he had previously lived.

The Baptist believed that the end was approaching ; but when different classes asked him for

¹ Matt. 6¹⁹.

² Matt. 6³².

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guidance, the conduct he prescribed was obedience to the laws of honesty, kindness, and good citizenship.¹ In Romans xiii. Paul wrote in view of the Crisis, the dawning Day that would bring Salvation ; yet the whole context is rich in guidance for us to-day.

In dealing with the passages about " the end of the age " we are beset by an unusual degree of difficulty in disentangling the actual words of Jesus from what may be accretions. It is beyond question that the first Christians expected an early advent of the Kingdom, and it may well be that they expected it to come by a sudden irruption of God's realm into man's. We may safely assume that these expectations were based on teachings of Jesus ; but in view of the persistent misunderstanding of Jesus' language by the disciples, we are not entitled to assume that these expectations were correct interpretations of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus' mind was filled with pictures of the " last days " that were found in Jewish prophecy or Jewish " revelation." In depicting the crisis which the nation and the world were approaching He made use of the images. But He claimed the right to transform prophecy while adopting it, for example the prophecy about the return of Elijah² ; and it would be contrary to all our reading of the Gospels to believe that language about the " last things " which was highly figurative as used by the original authors became prosaic statement of fact in the mouth of Jesus.

¹ Luke 3^{10ff.}

² Matt. 17^{10ff.}

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Jesus certainly announced that some epoch-making world transformation would take place within His own generation. He definitely disclaimed knowledge of the date of the beginning of the new era ; and in various utterances, for example, in the parables of the Unscrupulous Vinedressers,¹ and the Five Prudent and Five Careless Maidens,² He hinted not obscurely that the consummation might be so long delayed that when it came the disciples might be found off their guard.

Even if we could convince ourselves that Jesus Himself was mistaken, both as to the date at which and the manner in which He would return to reign, the fact, while of some speculative importance, would affect no moral or religious interest. Jesus came to found the Kingdom, not to be the historian of the Kingdom, whether of its past or its future. We can see from the New Testament that the early Church was guided to this view by God's Spirit ; and that, while puzzled by the continued postponement of their hopes and compelled in some measure to reconsider their attitude to life, they instinctively felt that the Gospel in its essence was a Gospel for life, in which limitations of time were as much an impertinence as limitations of race or territory.

¹ Matt. 2133ff.

² Matt. 251ff.

CHAPTER XVI

The Strong Man Despoiled

IF it is misleading to turn into prose Jesus' pictorial representation of the "last things" and the advent of the Kingdom, it is impoverishing our religious lives to ignore it. Our Lord's teaching on the Advent of the Son of Man enshrined one of His deepest and most fundamental convictions; and nothing will so hasten the Advent as the adoption by the Church of that spirit of eager expectation and alert preparation on which He dwelt so much in the last days of His ministry.

Jesus came that the will of God might prevail in the world, that it might prevail through Him, and that human institutions might be transformed in harmony with the new spirit. What hostile influences have first to be overcome? There is almost no indication that Jesus regarded His ministry as a direct campaign against the supremacy of Rome. Jesus did not think of Cæsar's kingdom as a rival to His own; they belonged to different spheres. Only in the spiritual realm could serious opposition be feared to the spiritual kingdom that Jesus had come to establish.

Before God's Kingdom can come, Satan's kingdom must be destroyed; and so before entering on His

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✓ ministry Jesus has a fierce contest with Satan,¹ in which Jesus successfully resists the suggestion that He should use His spiritual power for worldly purposes. The temptation continued in some measure throughout His ministry ; and one form of the struggle was the warfare against demons, the emissaries of Satan that caused mental derangement and certain forms of bodily disease. Jesus put the work of exorcising demons in the very forefront of His ministry ; and the recognition that He conceived of this as part of the contest with Satan explains a fact which otherwise puzzles us : the indignation and sense of horror with which Jesus repels the charge of being in league with Beelzebub².

We whose world is not peopled with multitudinous spiritual agencies may think the suggestion unworthy of serious notice. But the theological professors of the time gave this as the official explanation of Jesus' power to expel a demon of blindness and dumbness. Thereby they struck at the very heart of the work of Jesus. He conceived of Himself as engaged in the work of gradually binding the strong man, Satan, before spoiling him of his goods, that is, of his dominion in the world. The suggestion that Jesus, while professing to dethrone Satan, was secretly on the side of Satan, if generally accepted, would have undermined the very foundations of Jesus' power. It was to turn the proof of Satan's overthrow into evidence of his continued reign ; and this is the unpardonable sin against the

¹ Matt. 4¹⁻¹².

² Matt. 12^{24ff.}

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spirit of God which was working in and through Jesus. It is as if a Christian minister were accused of making a fortune from his profession and of living a private life that gave the lie to all his teaching.

As Jesus went on with His work, one of its features became more and more prominent, the limitations under which He laboured, limitations for example of space and time. When He was in this village, He could not be in that village. When He was healing a sick person here He could not be healing a sick person there. While He was preaching in a synagogue, other synagogues had to wait their turn. He could only go on day after day, with much fatigue and conscious loss of strength, from patient to patient, from village to village, from synagogue to synagogue. He needs frequent intervals for rest, and sleep and food. Yet the work presses and time is rapidly passing.

Only in one way can He multiply His power, by training a band of men to deliver the message. When the twelve are ready He sends them out on a missionary tour, giving them "authority to cast out demons"¹ as an essential part of their equipment. When they, or at least, when the seventy, return with the announcement that they too can exorcise demons in the name of Jesus, He regards the event as epoch-making.² Satan has fallen from his throne like a lightning flash. Since the power of Jesus can work through His followers, there is a guarantee that Satan's overthrow is permanent,

¹ Mark 3¹⁵.

² Luke 10¹⁸.

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not confined to the temporary sojourn of Jesus on the earth.

But the attempt of the disciples to heal the epileptic boy¹ showed that, even with the new equipment of the disciples, where Jesus was not present in person Satan's kingdom might still prevail. In one other respect also, while the forces of God's Kingdom were already present and at work, and Satan's power was in a measure already overthrown, it was only in a weak and tentative form that the Kingdom could be said to be actually present. If the Kingdom was to come "with power," Satan must be dislodged from his last stronghold, which was not in men's bodies, nor altogether in their minds, but in their wills. Multitudes of men, and especially the men whom God had appointed as trustees of His own people, were yielding voluntary allegiance to the dark powers.

There was only one way in which this mass of human purpose which had made evil its good could be overcome : by allowing it to do its worst, to work itself out to its logical conclusion, to dash itself to pieces against the King of God's Kingdom. The apparent triumph of Satan would be his final overthrow. The victory that Jesus would win over evil by allowing it to crush Him would release Him from the limitations under which He had worked ; and He would stand forth at last as God's King in power. [Lord of space and time He would be able to meet with all men everywhere who at any time

¹ Mark 9¹⁴ff.

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sought Him, and to strengthen them with the whole power of God, Satan at last under His feet.)

Has not much of the difficulty that men have felt about Jesus' descriptions of the "last things" been due to their refusal to see His death in the light in which He saw it? To Jesus His death was not an accident nor an incident nor a death in any degree resembling any other death. It was the deliberate murder of God's heir by the men whom God had appointed to be stewards of the vineyard that He Himself had cherished with such loving care.¹ It was the final overthrow of Satan; the essential prelude to the coming of the Kingdom in power. It would mean the final rejection of God's chosen people; the loss of their capital city of which a Psalmist had sung:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
May this hand of mine wither;"²

the destruction of their temple which the pious Israelite loved with a passionate love:

"Better a single day in Thy courts,
Than a thousand in mine own chambers."³

He in whose heart the fire of Jewish patriotism burned with a pure spiritual flame foresaw all this. The crisis which Jesus saw approaching was the Armageddon of the spiritual world from which God in the person of His anointed King would emerge victorious, His supremacy at last unchallenged;

¹ Matt. 21^{33ff.}

² Ps. 137⁵.

³ Ps. 84¹⁰.

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but the final struggle, spiritual though it was, would shake to their foundations the realm of nature and the life of man. Can we wonder that as Jesus used the imperfect instrument of the language of Hebrew prophecy and "revelation" to convey to His disciples something of His own overmastering sense of the impending world tragedy that sent such emotion surging through His own soul, they carried away but a vague conception of what it all meant?

There is no part of the Gospel story where we are more apt to get out of touch with reality than in Jesus' pictures of the final conquest of Satan, the end of the age, and the coming of the Kingdom in power. While we must never underestimate Jesus' fondness for a pictorial medium for the expression of abstract truth, it seems practically certain that He thought of Satan and demons as external personal existences, tempting men to sin and causing many bodily and mental diseases. The advance of modern science has led us to seek the origin of disease in more tangible enemies than demons; and the progress of philosophy has disposed us to find the seat of temptation in our own souls rather than in any external power.

Yet we keep most in touch, not only with the atmosphere of the Gospels but with the facts of life, when we realise the extent to which the physical and mental evils of life are traceable to spiritual causes; to ignorance, and gluttony, and greed, and lust, and ambition. Whether we look at the city slum, the hospital, the lunatic asylum, the gaol,

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or the hidden plague, a little experience soon convinces us that the missionary who will bring in the Kingdom is not the physician, the policeman or the magistrate, but the exorcist of evil spirits.

If we would see life as Jesus saw it, we must give its full place to His conception that His death and resurrection were the crisis of the history of the world, and would precipitate the sudden irruption of God's Kingdom into the course of this world; or rather, not of this world only but of the universe. For if we ask whether the Kingdom, as Jesus pictured it, is simply this world of ours and our human life, perfected and glorified, or whether the Kingdom can be realised only in a spiritual world beyond time and sense, the answer is that Jesus did not draw the sharp distinction that we draw between life on this side of the grave and life on the other side. This life also is God's life; this world can be transfigured into God's world. Yet the Kingdom is a spiritual banquet at which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will take their places among the reclining guests.¹

The issue of the world's moral conflict is no longer in doubt. A dynamic has entered the world which will bear down all opposition until God has become "the whole life of all His creatures."² Throughout the world war we have been told again and again that "civilisation is in danger." No one who looks out on life with the eyes of Jesus, no one to whom the death and resurrection of Jesus mean what they meant to Him, can believe this for a moment. The

¹ Matt. 8¹¹.

² 1 Cor. 15²⁸.

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Acts of the Apostles, with its story of fearlessness, irrepressible zeal, illumination and spiritual effectiveness, is the first chapter in the history of the new era. In a few weeks the timid half-blind followers, who saw in Calvary nothing but the ruin of all their hopes, became the dauntless heroes whose one aim in life was to preach Jesus Christ crucified and risen. It has been customary to ascribe the transformation to the Resurrection; but this is not the testimony of the Acts. The power that made them drunk as with new wine was the Second Coming of the Master, freed from the limitations of His earthly life, on the day of Pentecost. The Kingdom of God had come with power.

It has sometimes been said that Jesus died as the Representative Man. Would it not be as near the truth to say that the men who crucified Him were the representative men: that all those who played any part, whether of malice or treachery, of weakness or cowardice, in bringing Jesus to His death, were just men like ourselves; that on Calvary we see for the first time the true inwardness of the thoughts and feelings we harbour every day? We have crucified God's Son; and He is risen: henceforth there is no more that we can do to Him. The prince of this world has been judged; a new era has begun.

Was Jesus right in thinking that the Kingdom would come in the "twinkling of an eye"? At least the dynamic of the Kingdom did come in the twinkling of an eye. But just as God's power was in the world,

¹ 1 Cor. 15²⁸.

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though thwarted at every turn, in the former era, when in a sense Satan's will might be said to prevail, so Satan's power is present, though it has received its death-blow, in the era of God's Kingdom. Satan's last stronghold is the will of man ; but all round us the stream of God's loving-kindness is beating with its floods of healing, life-giving energy at the barriers of our own erection, barriers of faithlessness, and prayerlessness, and preference for the life which is death. God's grace is always beyond the measure of our capacity to receive, even if we would open our hearts.

The New Testament from beginning to end is a missionary book. It deals with times of crisis when the struggle between God's Kingdom and Satan's kingdom assumes its most elementary and most easily visualised form. Much of the scenery of the "last things" could be paralleled from the experience of young Christians and young Churches in the Orient to-day ; and while on the whole the progress of the Kingdom has been a process of growth, it has been growth punctuated by a series of crises from which we can say :—"The old has gone. Lo ! the new has come."¹

¹ 2 Cor. 5¹⁷.

CHAPTER XVII

New Heavens

While Jesus made large use of the Old Testament conception of the Kingdom of God, the image was always His servant, never His master. In certain important connections where it did not help His thought, He discarded it. In some of the sayings collected by Matthew in the " Sermon on the Mount " He employs the thought of the Kingdom ; in many others it has no place. In the two central parables, the Unfilial Son¹ and the Good Samaritan,² the imagery is taken from quite other spheres of life. And in the deepest thought of Jesus' heart, the relation of God to Himself and to men, and the relation of men to each other, it is not to the state but to the family that He turns for pictures to guide our thinking. God is not our King but our Father ; men are not fellow-citizens, but brothers.³

We have then the conception of a Christian state, or if we prefer it a Christian family, the members of which are united by the common tie of their allegiance to Jesus, and by no other tie ; having at their disposal for the renovation of their own lives and of the world they live in the whole resources of the power

¹ Luke 15^{11ff.}

² Luke 10^{30ff.}

³ Luke 24⁹, 11³⁰.

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of God, limited only by their own receptiveness. But this state or family is not self-contained: on peril of its life it must continually enlarge its borders, bringing into captivity ever new members and ever new departments of life.¹ This state has no statute-book. The law of admission is loyal love to Jesus. The law of its life is to bring every question to the touch-stone of the mind of Jesus.

Whatever superficial or even real resemblance there may be between the life of the followers of Jesus and the life of others, Jesus Himself believed that He was revolutionising human conduct. "It is not so among you"² is one key-note of Jesus' moral teaching. The Christian must rise above the level of the pagans who are tossed about with questions of eating and drinking,³ and greet only their co-religionists⁴; above the level of the tax-gatherers whose love like their hatred is a mere question of give and take.⁵ His morality must have God in view, whereas the play-acting of so many of the Pharisees in their praying, fasting, and alms-giving, was simply trading on the popular respect for piety.⁶ The Christian not merely transcends the point of view of the man of the world: he reverses it.⁷ The Mosaic code had in view the magistrate's bench: the Christian remembers that God looks on the heart.⁸ The demand of Jesus is always for something "over and above" the best that men have

¹ Matt. 13³¹⁻³³.

² Matt. 20²⁶.

³ Luke 12^{29f}.

⁴ Matt. 5⁴⁷.

⁵ Matt. 5⁴⁶.

⁶ Matt. 6¹⁻¹⁸.

⁷ Matt. 5¹⁻¹².

⁸ Matt. 5^{12ff}.

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risen to outside of Him.¹ The Baptist, Prince of the prophets of the old era, would have a very humble rank in the new.²

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment in the Law, He quoted two:—"Love God; love your neighbour."³ Jesus may not have been combining for the first time those two commandments which came from different parts of the Pentateuch.⁴ But He widened to the utmost bounds of humanity the circle within which the claims of neighbourliness held good; and by linking on the second commandment to the first, He gave us what else is lacking, the reason why my neighbour in this wide sense has claims on me.

Why should I help a wounded traveller whom I meet on the road, without first enquiring what we have in common? For this reason, that my neighbour, even if he has no other kinship with me, is related in exactly the same way as I am to the God who loves us both. The brotherhood of man, if it is not very explicitly taught by Jesus, is implicit in the story of the Good Samaritan, in Jesus' impartial dealings with all sorts and conditions of men and women in the Fatherly name under which Jesus teaches us all to think of God, and especially in the combination into one, of the two commandments to love God and love our neighbour. It is characteristic that this guiding principle of the Kingdom is not a commandment in the old sense at all; it is a new attitude based on new insight.

¹ Matt. 5^{46f}. ² Luke 7²⁸. ³ Mark 12^{30f}. ⁴ Deut. 6⁵, Lev. 19¹⁸.

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This then is the Kingdom's law of gravitation : God in the centre ; all men attracted to God, attracted to each other, by the very law of their being ; finding their welfare only as they obey this impulse ; able to resist it even as we can oppose ourselves to the law of gravity, but only at the cost of pain and fruitless struggling against the course of things. If we set self up as the centre of the universe, we can delay God's purpose for the world ; we cannot carry out our own, any more than we can thwart the law of gravity by springing into the air.

As we yield ourselves to this law, the power of God floods into our hearts and makes us strong. Christian love is love energising and effective ; it is the demolisher of barriers. Under Satan's rule there are barriers between man and God, between nation and nation, class and class, individual and individual. It is the work of the followers of Jesus to tear them down, to seek out men, help them to know each other, bind them in a chain of friendship and loving service. Clear-cut is the picture that Jesus draws of the citizens of the Kingdom ; loving, blessing, praying without thought of self, giving, forgiving, never despairing, showing mercy, refusing to criticise or condemn, and finding all this worth while.¹

If love is the great constructive force of life, and it is only while we are in the path of unselfish service that we are doing work that endures, hatred is the great disintegrating force. Watch a man who is allowing hatred to eat into his heart : how it blinds his judg-

¹ Luke 7²⁷.

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ment, leads him to ascribe to Beelzebul work done in the spirit of Jesus, corrodes his finer feelings, vivifies his baser instincts, turns his energies into false channels, and spreads the corrupting influence of his malevolence into the lives of others ; for there is a leaven of the Pharisees as well as a leaven of the Gospel. We understand the Sermon on the Mount best when we take it as a commentary on the life of Jesus, and the triumph of the Pharisees on Calvary was their unconscious comment on Jesus' exposition of the nature of unholy anger.

[Short of hatred there are other unchristian tempers that lead men to defy Jesus' law of spiritual attraction. There is ambition, for example, the ambition that I should get above the other man, with its converse that the other man should be thrust below me. This sin is one of the snares of the "Christian worker." It is suggestive that Jesus' "Not so among you"¹ was directed in the first place against an outbreak of this vice of the worldling in the apostle circle. [Worldliness is never quite so deadly as when it happens to mistake itself for zeal to save souls.] Evangelism when not directed and restrained by the grace of God may easily degenerate into proselytising and a mere counting of scalps. It is hardly too much to say that, of all enemies within our borders, love of power and love of glory are the most effective hindrances to the free working of the grace of God through His Church ; that worldly ambition has produced far more treachery, conscious

¹ Matt. 20²⁶.

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and unconscious, among the disciples than love of money ; and one reason why we hesitate to accept the theory of Judas' conduct put forward in the Gospels, in so far as they can be said to put forward a theory at all, is simply that it is not in accordance with our experience.]

Yet feelings of Pharisaic self-complacency and contempt, whether on the part of the Christian or the outsider, are no more in place on this aspect of the Christian life than on any other. Look for a moment at the apostles' contest for the premiership in the Kingdom. Hardly ever did they show to less advantage, and we are grateful that the tendency to throw a halo round them was not allowed to eliminate the story. Jesus knew that in a few days the whole future of His Kingdom would depend on these men. If even after this scene He did not despair of them and they did not despair of themselves, then we who recognise our kinship to the apostles better in this scene than in most others may take courage.

Ambition at once produced its natural fruit, disunion: the two separated from the ten. "The ten" then formed a union, a union which reminds us that unity is not necessarily nobler than schism ; for the tie that bound them was ambition, jealousy and anger. Jesus' method of dealing with the twelve, who at that moment were not in the least the twelve of sacred art, is a model for ecclesiastical disciplinarians. He distinguished between disloyalty and a steadfast loyalty that sometimes mistook the

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way. It was not a case for the Master's stern rebuke but for the Teacher's patient instruction. Jesus Himself had known the temptation to see at His feet the kingdoms of the world in all their splendour.¹

As so often happens with our ambitions, the two did not know what they were asking. Could they have looked forward and seen the two thieves, one on His right hand, the other on His left, would they still have prayed that they might have the posts, one on His right hand, the other on His left? Yes, perhaps they would; and Jesus knew that. Even as it was, who shall say that their petition for all its worldliness was all worldly? Jesus read their hearts, and saw that when He explained to them that in the Kingdom the only greatness is the greatness of service, they would still want to be great, but now in His way. Not long after James did tread the bloody path of the Master,² and if John did not tread it also, a point on which there is some obscurity, it was not from any want of will. Jesus, who saw the deadliness of sin as we never see it, never despaired of it as we despair of it. [If only men's faces are in the right direction, He is "always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient."] ³

Jesus' conception of the world as a vast league of kindness in which we fling down every barrier that separates man from man, and destroy every influence that places men in hostility to each other, gave the key to the past history of the world as well as to its future. Just as the law of gravity had operated

¹ Matt. 4^{8f}. ² Acts 12². ³ 1 Cor. 137. Dr. Moffatt's translation.

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for millennia before Newton discovered it, as the orbits of the planets had followed Kepler's laws in the long ages before Kepler, so it was as true under Satan's reign as under God's reign, that every structure based on envy, greed, ambition, malice, hatred, is evanescent ; that only work animated by the principles of Jesus is founded on a rock.

Even in primitive times men knew that friendly co-operation is the law of the family and the tribe : for one section of a house or a kingdom to take part against another is suicidal. But men acted in view of gravitation before they knew the law of gravity ; and they recognised its working on the earth before they thought of looking for it in the planets and the stars. The story of the Good Samaritan, bringing as it does even the lowly beast of burden within the circle of love and service,¹ is the final expression of the law of spiritual gravitation. We know nothing of the wounded traveller beyond the fact that he was a wounded traveller ; we do not know whether he was Jew, Gentile or Samaritan, whether he was educated or ignorant ; rich or poor ; bad or good. The priest and the Levite conceived of their duty towards him as negative ; they let him alone. Even this is an advance on the stage which says : Here is an enemy ; let us kill him. But all Good Samaritans, whatever influences may try to thwart them, have the whole trend of things on their side.

There is one case in which even the antichristian principle can be made to subserve the law of love :

¹ Luke 1034.

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where the Christian himself is the object of the hatred or the malice. The Christian attitude towards malice occupies a prominent place in the teaching of Jesus ; and in the first place great attention is given to the duty of forgiveness. Injury done by man to man sets up a double barrier ; consciousness of wrong inflicted on the one side, of wrong suffered on the other ; but barriers are things to be pulled down. When the man who has done the wrong pulls down the barrier on his side by acknowledging the wrong and seeking reconciliation, Jesus tolerates no further barrier of resentment on the side of the wronged. He dwelt on this again and again. Forgiveness of injuries is a condition of prevailing prayer. If we do not forgive men, we cannot expect God to forgive us.

The picture is not of God standing on His dignity, as it were, and saying : " If you do not forgive men their trespasses against you, I will not forgive your trespasses against Me."¹ God's forgiveness is for His repentant children ; but the filial spirit towards God involves the brotherly spirit towards all who call God Father. When the wandering son comes back and says " Father, " the elder brother must learn to say " Brother." To cherish pride and resentment and refuse to acknowledge family claims would involve that we do not belong to the family and are not fit for forgiveness.

At this point as much as anywhere Jesus finds us out. It is easy to forgive the hypothetical injuries

¹ Matt. 6:15

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of abstract enemies ; it is easy to forgive our neighbour's enemies ; but when we are smarting from the concrete insult of a tangible enemy of our own, it is then we search the Scriptures to see if the teaching of Jesus on forgiveness can possibly apply to a case like this. Our forefathers worried about the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost : are we not inclined to worry more about unpardonable sins against ourselves ? Love of revenge is often so intertwined with a genuine hatred of unfair dealing and a sense of moral superiority that it may seem almost a virtue.

The injuries that make the problem practical for us are of every degree of seriousness. Of some it would be sacrilege to speak.

“ Happy be he who shall seize and dash
Thy children against the rocks.”¹

God will not judge such sentiments apart from the deeds that occasioned them. A slave under a brutal overseer, a dependant under a woman with a genius for petty insult, the helpless victim of industrious slander, when these people in their torture ask what forgiveness means for them, the question assumes another complexion than it has when asked from a Professor's chair. But it is not so paradoxical as it sounds to say that resentment is often keenest and forgiveness found most difficult where the wrongs are of that petty nature that only vanity would feel, and where as often as not the supposed aggressor is convinced that he is the victim. The

¹ Ps. 137⁹.

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apparent magnitude of the sin to be forgiven depends as much on our own self-love as on any quality inherent in itself.

One of the marks of the pagan is that he enjoys a state of hostility: the Christian always wants to forgive and to be forgiven. Jesus' teaching is that God's endless forgiveness of men in Heaven is to have its counterpart in men's endless forgiveness of each other on earth.¹ In this particular form of well-doing, however often we may be called on to practise it, there is no room for weariness. There is only one limit to the duty of forgiveness. The father does not welcome home the wandering son until the son says, "Father, I have sinned." We do not necessarily promote the spirit of brotherliness by ignoring unbrotherliness.² If some one has done us a serious injury and we know he is only waiting his opportunity to repeat it, when we say we forgive him, our meaning is not obvious.

Yet, whether he repents or not, we have a duty towards him; a duty of a positive kind. The father saw the returning son when he was still a long distance away, which he would not have done had he not been eagerly on the look-out. The Christian's object is always to win the brother.³ Christian tact will dictate the course most suitable for each occasion, and there may be cases where prayer is our only available weapon. An impartial study of the offender's point of view is always involved; this will often of itself blunt the edge of our natural resentment. In par-

¹ Matt. 18:35.

² Luke 17.

³ Matt. 18:15.

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ticular we have often to make allowance for his training and his unconsciousness of the full meaning of what he is doing.¹

If those who wrong us minimise the offence, the light of the Light of the world will prevent us from magnifying it; will help us to see our grievances and all the affairs of our lives as they are, the little things in all their littleness, the big things in all their bigness. If the offender does develop a new mind and says, "I have sinned," the joy of the follower of Jesus is not the joy of self-love vindicated, but joy over another soul yielding allegiance to the world's great law of love.

Here also Jesus' verbal teaching is a commentary on His own life. All through the scenes of the betrayal, the arrest, the trial, the scourging, the mocking, the crucifixion, there is no bitterness, malice, contempt, or hatred; everywhere strength and dignity, and forgiveness where we look for it least of all.² This patience under wrong was neither effeminacy nor stoicism nor fatalism. It was trustful submission to the Father's will. But the "meek and gentle" Jesus was sometimes neither meek nor gentle. He called Herod "that fox"³; but for the most part it is when dealing with the Pharisees that He shows us what Godlike anger can be. Jesus was infinitely pitiful to all the weak, the ignorant, the suffering. Here were men who boasted of their strength and prostituted it to base purposes, who fought against Him in His work

¹ Luke 23³⁴.

² Luke 13³⁵.

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and tried to thwart God's purpose for the world; and with flashing eye Jesus attacked them in one of the sternest denunciations in literature.¹ The pity that filled the heart of Jesus for the stumbling, over-laden bleeding bullocks, had its counterpart in His indignation against the heartless drivers who goaded them on. His tenderness for the lost sheep,² His wrath against the hireling shepherds who neglected when they did not harry them, were but two sides of the same emotion.

May we follow Him in His holy anger as well as in His forgiving love? Yes, provided our anger has the same springs as His. He spoke not as a private individual but as a messenger of God. His denunciations were directed not against individuals but against a system. The wrongs that roused His wrath were in no sense personal. The victims were either God's messengers,³ or the men and women for whom the scribes and Pharisees stood trustees.⁴ He who made the indictment could read men's hearts.⁵ No taint of self distorted His judgment. And this especially let us note, when the prophetic mood is on us, that Jesus' denunciations ended with a sob.⁶

¹ Matt. 23.

² Matt. 9³⁶.

³ Matt. 23²⁹⁻³⁶.

⁴ Matt. 23^{13ff}.

⁵ John 2²⁵.

⁶ Matt. 23^{37f}.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Christian Law of Revenge

FORGIVENESS will involve restoration of the old relations as far as they can be restored ; though the man who has done the wrong will recognise that in some cases time is required to test the sincerity of his repentance before the wrong can be ignored. But the ideal that Jesus sets up for His followers when they are wronged goes far beyond forgiveness in the sense of cancelling the past, or any mere willingness to shake hands.

In savage morality each injury is requited by injury limited only by the power to inflict it. In the Mosaic code revenge is restricted to the extent of the injury : an eye for an eye ; a tooth for a tooth. In one of the best-known passages of the Gospels Jesus expounds the Christian law of revenge, which seems to say that instead of trying to " get even " with the man who has hurt us by hurting him in return, we should invite him to continue his assaults on us with redoubled energy.¹

Round this point, more than round any other, is the age-long battle between the Christ and the world being fought to-day. When our fathers

¹ Matt. 539-42.

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defended the Christian Gospel, their apologetic took the form of works on metaphysics or "Christian evidences" or Biblical criticism. Our problem is whether the ethics of the "other cheek" is a Gospel fit for a man. It is the offence of the Cross in its most recent form. When one is struck, the natural man wants to be free to hit back. To become a follower of Jesus is to tie our hands behind our back, or so it seems. The feeling of shame which so often prevents a free confession of Christianity is due to the belief, often hardly conscious, that in some important matters Christianity and cowardice are hardly distinguishable.

Jesus gives four illustrations of the Christian law to revenge. If a man strikes you on the right cheek, offer him the other too. If someone claims your shirt and is going to file a suit, don't dispute the point. Give him your shirt and your coat as well. If the state or the military authorities exact forced labour from you, give them voluntarily twice as much as they demand. Never refuse a request for a gift or a loan.

It is obvious that these instructions are intended to be read, as Paul would say, "with the intelligence also." To give to everyone who asks, far from being a Christian kindness, is often a deadly wrong. The slave who, when his master struck him on the one cheek, promptly presented the other, would richly deserve the castigation that would follow. Not only may we do the wrong thing in a right spirit, but we may do the right thing in a wrong spirit.

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When people try to deprive us of our just rights, we may let them have their will through laziness, or indifference, or cowardice, or sycophancy, or fear of expense, or sheer contempt. Needless to say, conduct inspired by any one of these motives has no Christian value whatever.

We understand the bearing of the passage most easily if we consider first the spirit against which it is aimed. A familiar type is the big little man, whose estimate of his own importance extends to everything with which he in any way identifies himself. He regards as sacrosanct his own money, his own property, his own time, his own legal rights, his own political privileges, his own person. These men are experts on all points of order and questions of precedence. Their lives are one long struggle against attempts, real or imaginary, to detract from their dignity or deprive them of their possessions.

That is the spirit Jesus wishes to root out of His followers. Certainly we have rights, precious rights. Some of them have been won only at the cost of the blood and the anguish of our forefathers, and we shall not lightly surrender them. In the well-ordered state justice between man and man is a priceless possession, and the Christian citizen is as much entitled to justice as his neighbours. It would not be good for our neighbours any more than for ourselves always to let them work their will on us, however cruel or absurd.

But there is another side to all this. Our Lord does not ask us to surrender our right to justice.

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But one of the things that distinguish the Christian citizen from other citizens is that if the Christian is attacked, in his person, his property, his reputation, or his feelings, he tries to understand the point of view of the person who makes the attack, and he will meet that point of view if he can. Our neighbour would not make his encroachments unless we had something that he wants.

We ask ourselves therefore : Is it possible that unjustly, though perhaps unintentionally or even unconsciously, we have been keeping from our neighbour something that is his by right? Jesus does not say, " If a man strikes you on the cheek *unjustly*," but simply, " If a man strikes you on the cheek." We do well to ask ourselves, even while we are smarting from the pain, whether the blow is deserved or not. In every country and in every generation there are whole classes of people often professing to be followers of Jesus, who keep their neighbours out of their just rights, who simply refuse to acknowledge their brothers' claims, until their brothers rise and smite them on the face.

For many it is a very healthy experience to be struck on the face ; it stimulates the conscience. We are to-day beginning publicly to acknowledge that the right to live a full human life is not the exclusive possession of a few favourites of fortune, but is the inheritance of all God's children. How many in our country, how many Christians even, acknowledged that right before they were compelled to ? It is not a pleasant experience when our brother,

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whom perhaps we have despised as well as defrauded, forcibly calls our attention to his claims. Our first impulse is to fight, to refuse to yield a single privilege except at the point of the sword.

Jesus says "No. When your brother smites you on the one cheek, turn the other." "Your brother has reminded you in a very ungentle way that you have been keeping back from him something that God meant him to have. You did not mean, perhaps, to be unjust or unkind; nevertheless you now see that you were both. Search your conscience then. Perhaps you will discover that you are still keeping from him other rights of which he himself is as yet unconscious." Surely it is better of our own accord and simply at the prompting of our own conscience to give him what is his rather than wait till he smites us again on the face. It is not rash to prophesy that there is a rude awakening in store for all in our country, who cling too long to any kind of unjust privilege.

So much for the case where our brother does well to smite us on the cheek. But it will often happen that when we examine our brother's claims, however dispassionately, they are founded, so far as we can see, on nothing more solid than envy, greed, or malice. When our brother smites us unjustly, there are two possible courses open to us. We can smite him in return; we can fight for our rights; we can try to crush him as he has tried to crush us; we can add our hatred and malice to his hatred and malice. In that case, whether he wins or whether we win, we

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have doubled the amount of hatred and malice at work.

Let us suppose our effort to resist his encroachment on our rights is completely successful ; yet it is a very barren triumph that we win. We have succeeded in restraining his actions ; but his whole soul is hostile to us. His writhing heart is full now not only of hatred but of longing for revenge. Jesus has set before us a nobler ideal.

There is only one way in which we can really conquer an enemy ; that is, by turning him into a friend. To produce two hating hearts where before there was only one may be a triumph for the pagan : to drive all hatred out of the hating heart, to capture the affection of the aggressor, that is the triumph of the Christian. But like all other victories worth having, it can be had only at a price. For the time being at least, our own rights become of secondary importance.

It is no effeminate submission that Jesus enjoins, but an ambitious, courageous, large-hearted striving that will be content with no revenge short of the complete surrender of the enemy, of his will to be an enemy. Some loss of property or of dignity is a small price to pay for the destruction of one evil will in a world where love is the only lasting foundation. The natural man is always asking : When may I leave off doing, enduring, forgiving ? Jesus wants our goodness to know no bounds.

Are then the rights, the property, the time, the money, of the Christian to be at the mercy of the

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first comer who takes a fancy to them? The apostles did not understand the matter so. Certain rights we are not entitled to give up at all, even when demanded by what seems competent authority. Under all ordinary circumstances the right to preach the Gospel is among these. When the Sanhedrin ordered Peter and John to stop preaching they refused point blank.¹

Moreover we must take the Christian law of revenge along with all the rest of the teaching of Jesus. This passage does not abrogate the claims of justice and honesty and fair-play; the right of women and children, the weak and the oppressed, to be protected by the Christian with the aid of every weapon at his disposal, physical, legal, or moral. A new motive has come into play; our brother's welfare, especially the welfare of his immortal soul. But the new motive has not abolished the old motives; nor have our hard won rights ceased to be precious, though we see now they are not the all-important things we used to think they were.

In any conflict of motives, each of them, taken by itself, Christian, the motive which should finally prevail with the Christian will depend upon circumstances. In the end Jesus carried out His own precept literally by allowing the Pharisees to work their will on Him; but in this He knew He was carrying out God's purpose for the world, and He evaded His enemies and carried on a moral resistance until His hour had come.

¹ Acts 4¹⁰.

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The New Testament, we remind ourselves once more, is a missionary book ; Jesus had always in mind the needs of mission work. The men and women who first carry the Gospel to a heathen country must carry out almost literally the injunction to turn the other cheek. This is the new principle beside which for the time being all others shrink into insignificance. The patient endurance by the early Christians of oppression and persecution gave a powerful impetus to the spread of the Gospel. A rebellion of Christian slaves, fighting for rights which were certainly theirs, might have worked untold havoc in the early Church. In the first Christian years a reputation for litigiousness would have hurt the followers of Jesus more than could have been compensated by any claims they would have substantiated. This is as true to-day as ever it was of pioneer missionary work. Had Mary Slessor entered the interior of Calabar with a battery of artillery for an escort, she would never have become the White Queen of Okoyong.

But when the strangest of all Christian principles, submission to wrong for the brother's sake, has made its impression, the rights of the individual must have their due ; more elementary and easily grasped, yet often almost equally unknown to heathendom. Shall the rights, for example, of hundreds or thousands of Christian men and women be sacrificed to the unjust whims of some heathen potentate ? There is a stage, often a long stage, where the missionary has to teach people to know, and even to struggle for,

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the recognition of their status as men and women. In all such questions not the word but the spirit of Jesus is the touchstone. Submission is never in itself a virtue ; the object of all our yielding is the hope of " winning the brother."

It comes to be then in a measure a question of fact : Does our turning of the other cheek win the brother ? In any country that we know, is it the case that the calm endurance by the " depressed classes " of the oppression of their " superiors " has led the latter to repentance ? One may grant that a submission which is partly ignorance, partly apathy, partly helplessness, is not at all the quality that Jesus is commending ; that a voluntary yielding to injustice by men who have the power to resist will soften any heart that is not obdurate. But there are Pharisees who can watch the patient endurance of their victim on his cross without a twinge of remorse. There are men whose minds are so deranged that we protect ourselves against them as we would against the brutes. Are there men who are *morally* at the brute stage and must be treated in character ? Let experience decide, so long as we are " eager to believe the best, always hopeful."

The words about giving and lending present no difficulty. The man who gives us an opportunity of helping him or helping some worthy cause is not an enemy to be evaded but a benefactor. The excuses that rise so readily to our lips are the measure of our failure to enter into the spirit of Jesus. Inability is the only valid plea and means the depriva-

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tion of a privilege. The Christian hand is the hand outstretched, outstretched in reconciliation, outstretched to lift the fallen neighbour, outstretched to give.

In all this are we taking the heart out of the words of Jesus? On the contrary, when we see Jesus' meaning—that the wants, the claims, the welfare of others are to be before us all the time, and especially in every dispute ; that we are not to have the luxury of considering only our own feelings, and that revenge is ruled out altogether—then for the first time we realise that the task to which our Lord has called us, though supremely difficult, is not beyond our strength and the grace of God. To the literalist it is simply a counsel of perfection to call forth a sigh for human frailty.

CHAPTER XIX

Shall we Smite with the Sword ?

ONE particular case of aggression, an organised attack by a community or a state on another community or state, has so many distinctive features that it is customary to treat it as a question by itself. Is the Christian community, and in particular the Christian state, ever justified in repelling force by force, or in using force to protect the weak neighbour against aggression ?

The question is often discussed as if the alternatives were love of peace and love of war ; but it is safe to say that millions of those who have fought in the world war have hated war with a far more deadly hatred, and with far more compelling reason than many of those who have done lip service to the cause of peace. Pacifism is advocated from as many and as diverse points of view as war itself. We are concerned here not with those whose opposition to war is based on distrust of the influence of capital on politics, or of the results of secret diplomacy ; not with those who believe that a class owes a greater duty of loyalty to the corresponding class in other nations than to their own country ; but with those who believe that a Christian soldier is a contradiction

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in terms. There are various shades even of this belief ; but no cynicism must blind us to the existence of a class of men, small perhaps in numbers, whose whole life is a testimony that their pacifism is not simply a desire to reap as much as possible of the fruits of war while escaping as much as possible of its burdens, and who are willing to pay the price of their conscientious convictions.

Once more there is no direct guidance in the Gospels ; and this is curious in view of the long history of the Jewish wars, and the fact that Jesus foresaw the final clash between the Roman Government and the subject Jews. We turn to the passage in the story of the arrest in which Jesus rebukes Peter :—" Put your sword back in its place. All who take a sword shall perish by a sword. Or do you suppose I cannot call on My Father and in a moment He will station before Me more than twelve legions of angels ? How then are the Scriptures to be fulfilled that so it must be ? " *

Jesus here gives three reasons for avoiding forcible resistance to arrest. First, a reason of prudence : if we adopt the weapons of earthly warfare we shall have to abide by them, and in a contest of that kind My little band has no chance. Secondly : I have no need to use earthly weapons ; I have at My disposal the whole power of God ; escape presents no difficulty. But thirdly : I have no desire to escape ; My arrest is in accordance with the will of God, long since set forth in the Scriptures.

* Matt. 26:52ff.

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Whatever the Christian missionary may learn from this, it does not shed much light on the duty of a nation attacked by another. Except on a doubtful interpretation of the first clause Jesus does not suggest that the use of arms is in itself sinful. It is not the case that nations which take the sword always perish by the sword: on the contrary some of the greatest triumphs in the history of human liberty have been achieved by nations which took the sword when, judged by every human test, they were hopelessly outmatched. Nor can nations or individuals often have that assured knowledge of God's will that guided Jesus at this crisis.

In this connection frequent use has also been made of the so-called "non-resistance" passage in the fifth chapter of Matthew, at which we have already looked. But if we are going to be literalists we must interpret literally. If Jesus is here forbidding resistance by force of arms, He is equally forbidding all other kinds of resistance, even verbal protests. He goes farther and says we must not only cheerfully give what is asked but far more than is asked. When Germany demanded a passage through Belgium, it was the duty of Belgium not only to let Germany's armies march freely through her territories but also to furnish supplies.

But this at once suggests to us that a nation, like an individual, is responsible not only for its acts but for all the consequences of its acts, so far as these can be foreseen. If our acts further injustice or cruelty we cannot divest ourselves of responsibility

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by quoting a text of Scripture. The "cursed be Canaan" school of exegesis has lost prestige.

The attitude Jesus invites us to adopt towards those who wrong us is not necessarily the Christian attitude towards those who wrong others. The victim is our neighbour as much as the aggressor and has at least as much claim to neighbourly treatment. Moreover, treating the question as a pure matter of exegesis, we cannot assume that the words of Jesus which are obviously intended for individuals are applicable in the same sense to communities and nations. The self-surrender to which Jesus calls us is never an end, always a means; the individual yields his temporal rights to further the spiritual welfare of another individual or of a community. This does not involve that the nation should sacrifice itself in the hope, possibly a vain hope, of bringing to a better state of mind another nation, it may be a small party in another nation. The arithmetic of the Kingdom is a vastly different science from the arithmetic of the schools; but even Jesus, who gave His life a ransom for many, never suggests the expediency of the many sacrificing themselves for the one or the few.

It would not be quite correct to say that pacifism always assumes that the destruction of human life is the greatest of all evils; yet some feeling of this kind is usually at the back of the minds of those who believe that all war is essentially unchristian for both sides. Jesus' view is that where there are spiritual interests at stake, the death of the body is an unimportant

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incident. Grant that no language will ever describe the horrors of war ; grant also that in many of its manifestations the law of Jesus is not so much suspended as reversed : that ploughshares are beat into swords and pruning-hooks into spears ; that we cease to gather and join the ranks of the scatterers ; that we come not to save men's lives but to destroy them ; that we rejoice at our neighbour's misfortune, harden our hearts against his cries, and grieve at his good. And in this pitiful harvest of war, they that go down to the battle and they that tarry by the stuff " share alike."

However convinced we may be that we pull down but to build up better, that the fire we bring is a purifying fire, it is difficult for one who has spent his life trying to drink in the spirit of Jesus to throw his heart into work like this. Wars will come ; but woe unto them through whom they come ! Is not all this the price we pay for living in a world where Satan's kingdom has not yet been finally overthrown ? The path that Jesus set before His followers was not a path of roses but of malice and anguish and blood. As missionaries of the Gospel they could not use the world's weapons in self-defence. And a Christian nation too may be too careful of the Ark ; may forget that God will defend His own Ark.

Yet we are co-workers with God even in the defence of His Ark. When the issue at stake is the liberty which our fathers have won for us through centuries of brave and weary strife, the honour of our women, the safety of our children, all that our hearts hold

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dearest ; before surrendering them in obedience to a text of Scripture, we must be quite sure that we understand the text. Many a foul deed has been wrought by men who were convinced that they were doing God service in obedience to a text of Scripture. The Christian may be called on at times to cut off his own right hand : Jesus has nowhere called on him to cut off the right hand of his wife or child or to allow others to cut them off if he can help it.

Even war is not all anti-Christ. War is concentrated history. Men who in peace time thought that things just happened, in war-time follow with breathless interest the finger of God writing page after page of human destiny. Classes and individuals learn that none can say to the others, " I have no need of you." The things we used to strive for and the things we used to forget are seen in some measure as God sees them ; and countless deeds of courage, endurance and love stultify the cynic and justify Jesus who for ever called on men for splendid forlorn hopes, with no thought that His challenge would fall on deaf ears.

A second common assumption of pacifism is that love never causes pain ; this in defiance of the facts of life, and of the teaching of Scripture, not least of Jesus Himself.¹ The attendant circumstances of war appeal in such overpowering fashion to the imagination that we are apt to put it in a class by itself. Yet it is only an extreme example of the category

¹ Matt. 18⁶, 35. 227.

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to which belongs also the preservation of order in the home, the school, the state. In the last resort the authority of the parent over the child, the teacher over the pupil, the state over the citizen, rests on force. One may grant that the extent to which physical force is used will usually be in inverse ratio to the moral force at the disposal of the authority; yet only the theory-ridden will bar out the possibility of physical restraint.

“Blessed are the peace-makers”; and often the most efficient peace-maker is he who prevents, by force if necessary, the unruly child, pupil, or citizen, from disturbing the peace. Jesus Himself, except in the doubtful case of the cleansing of the Temple, and the still more doubtful case of the escape at Nazareth, did not use physical force; but are we quite certain that the Pharisees found the tongue of Jesus a milder weapon than the lash? ¹

In war the slaughter, the pillage, the cruelty, the destruction, are naked and unashamed. But in many and perhaps in most wars, the sum total of the loss of life, happiness, and property is less than the loss caused in peace time by greed, lust, apathy, ignorance, conscious and unconscious cruelty, in the drink traffic and its sister vice, in slumdom, and the seamy side of industrialism. Are we to “resist not” these enemies also and invite them to extend the area of their depredations? Even the Christian pacifist will struggle against them, endeavour to secure their suppression by legal enactment, and

¹ Matt. 23 etc.

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expect the State to use all its power, including its physical force, to make such legal enactments a reality. At least if he does not adopt this attitude, it will seldom be on account of his pacifism.

This reminds us that most of us so seldom use force in defence of our rights that we are apt to forget the extent to which we use it by our proxy, the policeman. But the police force is a modern institution; and it is not so long since each man had to defend his life, his family, and his goods by the strength of his own right arm, or of other right arms which he hired for the purpose. As we look back that seems almost a semi-savage state of morality. Our real protection from crime to-day is not the policeman, but the fact that the vast majority of us have tacitly agreed to extend some of the obligations of neighbourliness to all our fellow-citizens. The policeman is not our enemy but our deputy.

War at the best is but a lawless remedy for lawlessness. In international relations we are still at the stage where every nation is its own policeman. We have to lift our thoughts a little higher and see a neighbour in the man across our borders. Till that time comes, does Jesus under all circumstances forbid the Christian nation the use of force? Take a test case. Read a page from the story of the Armenian massacres. Then, if we can, let us picture a battalion of Christian soldiers standing idly by in the name of Jesus!

Does Jesus then make no difference in war? On the contrary one of the surest tests of the advance

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of the Kingdom is the extent to which the conscience of the peoples revolts against war. Mars does not spring full-armed from the head of any statesman. It is not after the war-trumpets have sounded but in the long years of peace that the Church, if she is true to her Master, will wage her war against war.

Nor will the Church which truly seeks peace in the spirit of Jesus be content to pray for it and preach about it. Study and thought and work are needed if we are to answer our prayers and fulfil our aspirations. Since the world has grown smaller, and nations affect each other so tremendously for good or evil, it has become a Christian duty to know our neighbours. Suspicion and distrust are fruitful of hostility, and it is better to suffer for believing the best than for believing the worst. But ignorance is not one of the Christian virtues, and if our neighbour is plotting to hurt us, we do not help him or ourselves by shutting our eyes.

Whatever the "Resist not evil" passage means, it certainly means that we are to study our neighbour's point of view, recognise his needs and difficulties, and be more than willing to help him to fulfil all his just and reasonable aspirations. We have retained pagan methods and ideals in our international politics long after national politics has been in a measure Christianised. When we discover in our country institutions or practices that are abhorrent to the conscience of the nation, we have an unfailing remedy : we bring them into the light.

Though the Church of Christ is weak in places

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where we had thought she was strong, yet even now the search-light of the Christian conscience of Europe, if allowed to play on the council chambers of its Chancellories, would hasten the day when we should guard the rights and the property of the nations as we guard the rights and the property of the citizens of our own nation : by a small police force appointed by mutual consent and the mutual goodwill of the peoples. If the Church were in earnest about this, in a few years the day of mighty standing armies and navies would be as dim a memory as the day of the highway robber.

In our own country there are demons to be cast out that can be cast out only by prayer and self-discipline : provocative demons of greed, national conceit, boasting and self-righteousness. A nation which is typified by John Bull in art, and " Rule, Britannia " in music, is a nation in which the work of the Church is not yet done. The war found Britain with one national anthem that we might sing in Church, and that not a prayer for the nation but a prayer for the king, of which the best that can be said is that the poetry and the music are not unworthy of the early Jewish sentiment. Have we realised the extent to which our lives are moulded by the songs we sing ?

Even in war a Christian nation may never forget that it is a Christian nation. Here is an extract from a circular issued by the Hungarian Minister of Public Instruction to all the teachers of the country in 1915. He calls on them to " pay special attention

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to educating the children in the coming term to the respect and honour due to our enemies ; that no hatred or contempt should enter the mind of the children against the brave men with whom their fathers are in deadly combat ; and that hate or contempt is not to be cultivated in the youthful minds. On the contrary they are to see in their enemies brave and honourable enemies, as do their fathers who fight."¹

Through it all the Church is called to the high task of upholding the Christian ideal, that the only worthy victory is not the crushing of the enemy but the crushing of his enmity, that any legacy left by the war of hatred and longing for revenge is the measure of our failure.

¹ Quoted in "Goodwill," 15th October 1915, from "The Morning Post," 26th August 1915.

CHAPTER XX

A New Earth

EVERY spirit moulds its environment, and the new spirit that Jesus gives will revolutionise the world and life. In the Gospels there is abundant material to show at least the general direction the revolution will take. It is characteristic that Jesus conceives of Himself as saving not the soul, nor the mind, nor the body, but the man. He came to give physical and temporal life as well as spiritual and eternal life; and it is a simple matter of fact that the general adoption of the principles of Jesus would at once raise the standard of health, vital energy, and longevity, to a standard such as the world has never conceived.

When Jesus was asked point blank whether the Kingdom had already come, He not merely mentioned His medical work among the proofs, but put it in the very forefront. "Blind men see again, lame men walk about, lepers are being cleansed, and deaf men hear."¹ Jesus once refused to help a man who thought he had been wronged in a question of property.² He never took up the position that questions of health or disease, pain or freedom from pain, are unimportant.

¹ See Luke 7²².

² Luke 12¹⁴.

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When patients came to Him He might have explained to them that pain and sickness have their spiritual uses, that health and strength misused may become instruments of cruelty and vice, that a sick-bed may be a centre of light and love. He did none of these things; in no recorded case did He refuse a request for healing.

As the spirit of Jesus prevails in a community, more and more will the prophet's vision be realised of the time when "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more."¹ Death and pain and disease must be in a mortal world; but where the spirit of Jesus is, they will never usurp the place that was meant for life and health and joy. In the early days of the struggle between God's Kingdom and Satan's kingdom in any country, we measure progress by the number of our Good Samaritans and of the hostelries at their disposal for their charitable work. As the Kingdom triumphs, the test of its progress is then the extent to which we no more need our Good Samaritans, and can close the doors of our hospitals and asylums because their work is done.

The world war has bitten into our minds the truth that Jesus tried to enforce by gentler methods, that everyone who deliberately or by indifference is responsible for stunting the growth or enfeebling the bodies of our youth is committing treason against the state. Our eyes have been at last opened to the fact that we have been emptying our villages, and

¹ Rev. 214.

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permitting an annual slaughter of the innocents in the slums of our big cities ; that squalor and daily anxiety and bitter poverty will not give us useful citizens any more than it will give us good soldiers.

In the war we would have given untold millions to have had fighting for us in living flesh and blood the phantom army of those who had died before their time even in the previous generation. Their lives were no more precious to us in war time than in peace time, but God was teaching us by His old method of insight rather than maxim. While Dives had Lazarus at his door, the thought that Lazarus might have any kind of relation to his life never occurred to him.¹ When there was an impassable gulf between them, then Dives discovered that Lazarus had feet which would make him a useful messenger and hands that might bear cool water even to Dives. Had Dives discovered the importance of Lazarus in this world he would have had no need of him in the next.

In the great Judgment scene at the end of Matthew xxv., the test of our citizenship is not the eloquence of our preaching, the orthodoxy of our theology, the magnificence of our contributions ; but the measure in which we have fought against hunger and thirst and nakedness, ill-health and homelessness and friendlessness. The Christian believes in the resurrection of the body, its resurrection even in this life. Who can add a few inches to his stature ? asks Jesus.² And the answer is ;

¹ Luke 16:19ff.

² Matt. 6:27.

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We can ; or at least we can help God to add the inches, if not to our own stature then to the stature of our children, by ceasing to poison them, and to starve them of nourishing food and fresh air and light and health-giving play, ceasing to bring them up amid surroundings where Jesus' talk of birds and flowers and hills and lakes is a foreign tongue.

We have seen that the key to the apparent contradiction that runs through much of Jesus' moral teaching is that any particular good for the many often involves the sacrifice of that good by the individual ; whence arises the anomaly that in the individual Christian life God's good gifts often come before us as temptations seeking to turn us from the straight road rather than as blessings to be enjoyed. Jesus made it a large part of His work on earth to fight weakness, disease and death. Yet He Himself died a young man ; there is no indication that He thought much of His health ; He recognised that the apostles needed an occasional rest, but there is no word of health in the instructions to the twelve or the seventy ; and He taught His followers to hold their lives cheap when the alternative was disloyalty.¹

In all spheres of life we find people who preserve their health and their equanimity by throwing excessive burdens on others. In the teaching of Jesus soundness of body is never the best, only a second best. A doctor in a plague camp, a nurse in a typhus hospital, a district officer fighting a

¹ Matt. 10²⁸.

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cholera epidemic in famine time, a soldier carrying a wounded comrade through shell-fire, a missionary working in the White Man's grave, all these have chosen the better part. Better a maimed body than a maimed soul. Jesus tended the body, gave eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf; but when His own call came He gave His body to be broken.

CHAPTER XXI

The Christian Home

IF the spirit of Jesus will transform our physical life, no less will it transform our home life. In Christian countries we are sometimes tempted to think that the institution of the Christian home is part of the constitution of things ; that it has always been and will always be, and that we need have no fear for it. But the Christian home is a product of Christianity ; like every other institution worth having, it has been won, won by age-long experience and struggle ; and what has been won can be lost.

The Christian home is in danger from various sides to-day. The threat from extreme socialism at the present moment may not be great in English-speaking countries ; but as state control extends, the idea of community of children may win adherents. The legalising of polygamy in Christian countries is a danger perhaps by no means so remote as it might have seemed a few years ago. The home is threatened by every measure that facilitates divorce for any but the gravest causes ; by every development, legal, medical or social, that makes vice safe and easy ; by the prevalence of irregular unions and unwillingness to have families.

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The existence of a class of women with wealth, abundant leisure, and unlimited opportunities for social gaiety, does not always make for social health. There is no Christian home where the children are left to the care of servants or to the tender mercies of the streets, whether it is desire for club life or for a wider sphere of usefulness that leads the mother to neglect her primary responsibilities. Every economic condition and every social tendency that compels or encourages the mother to add to the family income by seeking outside employment is an enemy of the home. Almost equally to be deplored is the state of things in which the father has no part in the education of the children, whether he is prevented by excessive hours of labour, or by the conception of his home as an hotel where he sleeps and takes some of his meals.

But the welfare and even the existence of the home is sometimes threatened in more subtle ways ; by the tendency for example to increase at the expense of her married sister the social respect in which the unmarried woman is held. If spinsters in the past have had a grievance in this respect it is not to be remedied by reversing the old relations.

The claim is often made in the name of unchallengeable justice that where women do the same work as men they ought to receive the same rate of wages. This claim seems to be based on the theory commonly held by the man in the street, that each piece of work has a definite value in itself and that the question who did the work is irrelevant. To the popular

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mind this may seem a truism ; yet every author, artist or musician, has the best of reasons for knowing that the general public does not accept this view as far as his department is concerned.

Unless we are to suppose that the woman worker with a family to support is to become the normal type, equal wages to men and women for similar work would place the married woman in an infinitely worse financial position than the unmarried woman of the same social class. This is not the place to discuss the very difficult economic question : What determines value ? Suffice it to say that even if to the individual employer it were a matter of indifference whether a particular piece of work was done by a man or a woman, a married worker or an unmarried, it is obvious that the state cannot afford to take this detached attitude.

The war which has revealed to us the unsuspected industrial possibilities of women has also sharply reminded us of the limits within which alone women can be spared for industrial life without endangering the state. When married women take their proper place in the body politic they will, if they are wisely led, make it clear that the relative economic status of men workers and women workers is a question of the most intimate concern to them, will compel the state to realise, a fact which our present system tends to obscure, that marriage for women is not only a profession, but the most important and honourable of all professions, albeit for the most part honorary.

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Jesus' conception of the home is gathered for the most part from incidental references. He simply assumed that the home in which parents and children educate each other is the unit of the Christian community. "Allow the children to come to Me,"¹ and nature herself teaches that they are most easily and effectively brought to Jesus by their father and mother; for home is not a glorified boarding-house but a school for training citizens for the Kingdom. It was in a home that the love of the child Jesus for father and mother was gradually merged in love for the Heavenly Father. He loved the home circle of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. Was it not from a home-sick heart the words were wrung?—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens have roosts; but the Son of Man has not a spot to lay His head."²

Was it only an accident that there were two pairs of brothers among the apostles?³ The great parable in Luke xv, is a story of home life; home life disfigured for a time by the selfishness and vice of one son and the unbrotherly jealousy of the other; still a picture that derives all its beauty from the quenchless love without which there is no home. In the Acts of the Apostles the Christians are "the brothers;" and, most significant of all, when Jesus wants a name for God that will help us to think of God as He thought of Him, it is to family life that He turns. Father is not only the Christian name for God but the only Christian name,⁴ the Father "from

¹ Mark 10¹⁴.

² Luke 9⁵⁸.

³ Mark 1^{16, 19}.

⁴ Luke 11².

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whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,"¹ and when this fact has more fully entered into our minds we shall more often hear that name for God in public prayer instead of metaphysical periphrases or the sonorous invocations of the Old Testament searching after God.

While in the Gospels family life is sometimes regarded as a joy and a source of inspiration, more often it is regarded as a temptation. The love of father and mother, brother and sister, wife and child, is often, we might even say usually, set before us as a hindrance to our free acceptance of the Saviour, a thing that comes between us and our duty. Jesus when we see Him at the beginning of His ministry has already left His home,² and the call to the first apostles was in one aspect a call to leave home and kindred.³ Bitter dissension in the home circle is an inevitable accompaniment of loyalty to Jesus.⁴

In the discussion that followed Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler, Peter reminded Jesus that the apostles had paid the price the ruler would not pay. Jesus in His reply implies that the renunciation not only of possessions but of home ties will be a common, even a normal experience for His disciples.⁵ In the ninth chapter of Luke we read of three candidates for discipleship; in all three cases the hindrance was love of home.⁶ Of the men who refused the invitation to the Great

¹ Eph. 3¹⁵.

² Mark 19.

³ Mark 1¹⁶f.

⁴ Matt. 10³⁴f.

⁵ Mark 10²⁹.

⁶ Luke 9⁵⁷f.

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Supper one pled home-ties. "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come."¹

Even more unexpected is the record in the Gospels of the relations of Jesus with His own home circle. His attitude to His mother in particular has not only puzzled many pious souls but has given occasion of scoffing to the enemy. In the Temple scene when He was twelve years old a mother's heart finds it difficult to understand what on a superficial view seems indifference to His mother's feelings.² In the Cana story, making all due allowance for the explanations of the grammarians, Jesus' reply to His mother's suggestion about the wine is, to say the least, unexpected.³

In a less ambiguous instance Jesus seems almost to abjure His family relationships. As He was teaching in a house packed to the door, a message came to Him that His mother, brothers and sisters were standing outside calling Him. Stopping in His talk: "Who are my mother and brothers?" He asked. Then sweeping the circle of His audience with that glance which never faded from the memory of those who saw, "See!" He says. "My mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will, he is my brother and sister and mother."⁴ On another occasion, a woman in the crowd,⁵ carried away by enthusiasm and wonder at His teaching, exclaimed:—"Blessed the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked." Surely, we think,

¹ Luke 14²⁰.

² Luke 24⁹.

³ John 24.

⁴ Mark 3³⁰⁻³⁵.

⁵ Luke 11²⁷.

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He will seize this opportunity of saying a kind word of His mother. "Nay; rather," He replied, "blessed they who hear God's word and keep it." So far as appears from the records it is not till the last scene on Calvary¹ that our Lord seems to evince that affectionate consideration for His mother that we expect from the beginning.

We have to keep in view the selective principle that preserved for us the stories of Jesus in the Gospels. It may well be that the first disciples knew and cherished scores of touching incidents of the home life of Jesus, of His tender affection for His mother, His brothers and His sisters. May we not even say that the stories just recalled find a place in the tradition just because they are not typical? It was the surprise of these sayings of Jesus, contradicting as they did all that was known of His domestic relations, that preserved them in the record.

We note also that Jesus' treatment of His mother, which gives so much offence to the modern secularist, so far as we have any record was no puzzle to Mary herself. We have inherited a theology which tends to exalt metaphysics at the expense of emotion; and part of the price we pay is our failure to realise what it cost Jesus to speak as He did in public, of His mother, his brothers and sisters. He who has drawn for us the father of the prodigal, his love that never failed, would not lightly wound a mother's heart. Rather is the very depth of His affection the measure of His grief in recognising that those who

¹ John 19^{26f}.

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were nearest Him by ties of flesh were no longer akin to Him in spirit. The members of His family thought He was insane ; they were calling Him out of a room crowded with people hanging on His words.¹ The hand that beckons us away from the work God has given us, however dear it be, is a hostile hand. Jesus was following His own teaching that one must pluck out one's right eye rather than lose the track.

[If we can only keep our friendships by warping our whole natures and living our whole lives on a lower plane, then Jesus' teaching is clear. Better a world of broken hearts than a soul dethroned. In the long run to degrade ourselves to please those we love is to wrong them as much as we wrong ourselves.] But Jesus' call to His disciples to be ready to break even family ties would have no meaning unless He recognised the home as among God's richest gifts to men. Family love is a pearl of great price which we have no right to barter but for one thing, the pearl of greater price.

In the home as Jesus conceives it, husband and wife educate each other ; but the master educator is the child. " He called a child and set it in the midst of them."² The helplessness of the child, the ease with which he can be fatally hurt, appealed to Jesus as it appeals to all natures that combine strength and tenderness.³ The child, like the Master, is no " respecter of persons," is the " only true democrat." The infant who has not as yet the

¹ Mark 3^{20f.}

² Matt. 18^{2.}

³ Mark 9^{42.}

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very conception of self is a rebuke to our heated striving for recognition.¹ The innocence of children gives them a direct access to God which we can reach only by an all but impossible purity of heart.² Interference with the free access of children to Him is one of the few things that make Him angry.³ The sight of those baby faces,⁴ after the discussion with the Pharisees about divorce, must have been as cold waters to a thirsty soul, and would be a sunny memory in the next scene when the rich ruler turned away; for the little child is as indifferent to money as Jesus Himself.

The child knows nothing of laws of nature, but believes that all things are possible: Jesus shares their belief.⁵ The utter fearlessness of children, their boundless belief in the possibilities of life, make them reckless beyond all human beings; and Jesus put recklessness high among the virtues. Like Jesus, children have a limitless faith, not only in the world but in men; they have the open receptive mind, the trustful heart, that Jesus loved. Jesus loved children just because they were children, with life all before them. We sing "A day's march nearer home," as if the mere passage of time brought us nearer home; when our experience often is that each day as it closes sees us gripping the truth of God with a less firm grasp.

If we are to be fit for the Kingdom, many of us have to unravel most of our life's work; to go right

¹ Luke 9^{46ff.}

² Matt. 18¹⁰; 5⁸.

³ Mark 10¹⁴.

⁴ Mark 10^{13ff.}

⁵ Matt. 17²⁰.

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back to where we started and become as children.¹ Or as it is put even more strongly in John's Gospel, we have to go back even beyond the beginning. Nothing less radical will suit than a new birth.² We are greatly concerned what we are to teach our children. To Jesus the question is, What can we learn from our children? In the teaching of Jesus as nowhere else, do we find the thought, surely one of the most daring thoughts that ever entered the mind of man, that if we would know the heart of God we must search our own hearts, as they open towards our parents on the one side and our children on the other.³ If we do not find God there, we shall not find Him anywhere.

The Christian society can have no higher aim than to be a family where the brotherly and sisterly spirit prevails⁴; and Jesus who is the head, is nevertheless a member of the family, one of "the brothers."⁵ Especially with the little ones He so identifies Himself that to receive the child is to receive the Master Himself.⁶

All this no doubt is idealising; but it is idealising not the imaginary but the real. In Jesus every one of the natural relationships of life is transfigured. To be a member of a family is to be called with a high and holy calling to a position in which we grow and learn of God and justify our existence, only as we abandon ourselves in seeking the welfare of our little community, and are quick to learn what each member can teach us.

¹ Mark 10¹⁵.

² John 3¹.

³ Luke 11²; 15^{11ff.}

⁴ Mark 10³⁹.

⁵ Matt. 25⁴⁰.

⁶ Mark 9³⁷.

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It was characteristic of Jesus' attitude to life to set a child in the midst of us, not that we might teach him but that he might teach us. He always wants us to remember not only "the other man," but the other side of things. On the whole in Gospel story we see the scribes and Pharisees at their worst. The genuine piety, which kept the order from dissolution and which sometimes peeps through the New Testament picture, neither they nor their pupils were likely to forget. In contact with Jesus tax-gatherers, sinners, women, children, are seen only at their best. In many of them there were ugly enough things; but to these the eyes of the world were sufficiently wide awake; Jesus shuts His eyes.

All Jesus' references to children are reminiscences of a happy childhood among His own brothers and sisters. Over Jesus' love to His mother the Gospels have drawn a veil which will not hide its existence from anyone with imagination. But there came a stage in His ministry when all earthly ties, even the dearest, became by comparison insignificant; when He must take His place as the elder brother in the great family of God; when Mary herself must learn, perhaps after a struggle and with a sword piercing her soul, to see in Jesus not only the Son of Mary, but the Son of Man.

There is no touch of exaggeration in our Lord's frequent warnings of the stumbling-blocks that lie in family affection. Many a business man continues to follow courses against which his whole soul revolts, because he would rather compromise with honesty

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than have the cold wind of poverty or discomfort blow on his wife and family. Bright young lives have been lost to the mission field because family affection has proved a snare instead of the blessing God meant it to be. In those times of crisis with which above all the New Testament deals, home joys which in quieter times lead heavenward may become our undoing. In non-Christian lands to-day the refusal to follow Jesus is often not a blank negative, but takes the old, old forms: "Wait till I have buried my old father or my old mother;" "A little while longer with my home circle;" "Shall I have any place to lay my head?"

It is to no lonely life that Jesus calls us. We need sympathy and the stimulus of friendship and love. Among the most touching things in the Gospels is Jesus' craving for companionship in the crises of His life, on the Mount of Transfiguration for example, or in Gethsemane. The family is God's provision to meet this need of our nature; and if at any time loyalty to Jesus involves separating ourselves from our natural comrades it is only that we may enter into the larger and fuller brotherhood and sisterhood of those who love Him.

Once more Jesus finds us out. How many Churches in Christian or non-Christian lands could truthfully assure those who are called on to make the sacrifice that in the Church they will find a home where warm brotherly affection and friendly sympathy will all but make them forget what they have lost? It is something at least to be reminded

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of the ideal that Jesus had for us, and the promise He made in our name.

In the early days of the world war thousands of our best and bravest knew in their own experience that Jesus was not painting in too dark colours when He represented the love of father and mother, brother and sister, wife and child, as being at times the most terrible temptation a man has to fight. Once more it is Jesus' teaching on bearing the cross. The follower of Jesus so prizes this gift of God that when His call comes he will give up his home that others may enjoy theirs ; the men of one generation will break up their homes by the thousand that their children and their children's children " shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree ; and none shall make them afraid."

CHAPTER XXII

Cæsar's Sphere and God's

THE question has been asked, Was Jesus a patriot? Of patriotism in the pot-house orator's sense of the word He had none. But He loved with a passionate love the national altar in Jerusalem which in its inception stood for all that was best and purest in the national life. He loved the village synagogue, the village life, the village home. Every blade of grass on every hillside and every ripple on the water was dear to Him. In the humblest of His countrymen He saw a trophy to be won for God. He nurtured His soul on the Jewish Scriptures; to Him Moses and David and the prophets had come straight from God with their message; and His country was the vineyard of God's special love.

Jesus' most explicit teaching on the subject of the home was given in response to two questions, one put by the Pharisees,¹ the other by one of His own disciples.² In the circumstances of the time it was inevitable that He should be challenged to define His attitude to the state. The issue was raised in the question of the legality from the Jewish point of view of paying the capitation tax to the Roman Government.³

¹ Mark 10².

² Mark 10²⁸.

³ Mark 12¹³ ff.

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The deputation which raised the question included representatives of two parties which answered it differently. The Pharisees who resented the domination of Rome were in theory at least bitterly opposed to the tax ; and if Jesus approved payment would use His answer to end His influence with the common people. The supporters of Herod, who was a nominee of Rome, presumably approved of the tax ; and if Jesus declared against it, both they and the Pharisees who hated Jesus more than they hated Rome would have ground for bringing a sedition charge against Him. Moreover partly by flattery, partly by the form of their question, they tried to shut Him to an inescapable " Yes " or " No."

Jesus answered in one of those baffling, thought-compelling utterances, that shed God's light on our problems while nevertheless leaving it to ourselves to solve them : " Pay Cæsar's debts to Cæsar ; God's to God."

The answer has sometimes been treated as if it were little more than a clever evasion ; but for several reasons we cannot rest in that attitude. The question was one which was bound to arise, not merely then but at every stage of the history of the Christian Church. Even to-day we are not within sight of a final solution. We cannot imagine that Jesus answered such a question with a quip.

Further, Jesus must have known, what was the fact, that His answer did nothing to mitigate the hostility of either section of His opponents ; that on the contrary He was playing into the hands of

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both parties by refusing to side with either. On the one hand His answer was understood as finally closing the door on any hope the "patriotic" party may have still placed in Him; and the Jerusalem crowd could now be and actually was induced to demand His death. On the other hand there was nothing in the non-committal form of His answer to prevent His enemies accusing Him of sedition; which, in fact, they did, and that successfully.

Jesus' answer was evasive; but what He was evading was neither death nor unpopularity. If He fell into the trap He might die at the hands of Rome as a political suspect. But it was written in the counsels of God, that, whatever the nominal charge, it must be obvious to the world that He died as the Messiah, rejected by the leaders of His own people.

This great saying of Jesus is constantly expounded as being His authoritative declaration on the relation between Church and State. But in the first place Jesus was not speaking to the Church at all, to His own followers; nor was He even speaking to members of a typical state. The point of the question was that the men who put it belonged to that abnormal type of state that we call theocratic. In the second place Cæsar does not stand for the typical Government; he was not merely a foreigner but a heathen. The question was whether a member of a religious state that acknowledged God alone as King, could without sin formally recognise the supremacy of a foreign usurper who was religiously unclean.

There is a striking parallel in the situation in

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India to-day. Not only is the British Government a foreign domination; but in theory at least to the Brahmin the Briton is religiously unclean. There are the Herodians in the Native States, and the Sadducees occupying honourable and well-paid posts in British India, on the whole well pleased with things as they are. There are the voiceless multitudes, not without discrimination or a sense of justice, but with the mob's tendency to be swayed by popular orators. India has her "patriotic" party too, clamouring for Home Rule and a revival of all things Indian, not least of Indian religions.

The resentment of the Home Rule party among the Jews against the Romans showed itself in contempt for the tax-gatherers who collected the customs duties imposed by the Romans on articles of commerce, and in hostility to the capitation tax levied on adult Jews up to the age of sixty-five. Indian "patriotic" feeling sometimes takes the form of antipathy to Government service, a preference for the freer and more irresponsible life of the lawyer or the journalist.

As in other sayings of Jesus, we have first to look at the surface interpretation and then go deeper. "Pay to Cæsar what is due to Cæsar." This can certainly be understood, and is most easily understood, as sanctioning payment of the tax by the Jews. The coinage system is peculiarly the symbol of the administration, and one of the best tests of its excellence. Good government is worth paying for.

The alternative to Roman rule was government

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by the Pharisees and the priestly Sadducees, as the alternative in India to British rule is government by the Brahmins. Jesus no doubt saw that the people were at least as happy under the Romans as they would be under the Pharisees. There was also some contempt in the answer. Their antipathy to Rome had its roots, not, as they pretended, in religious puritanism, but in offended racial pride. When they should have been cultivating their vineyard they were occupied with questions of ownership; as many young Indians to-day frankly give the supreme place in their lives to political issues over which they have little control, to the exclusion of urgent social, moral, and religious problems, the solution of which is largely in their own hands.

There was a further point. Was it really logical to conclude that because Cæsar's image and name were on the coin, therefore the coin was Cæsar's and must be paid to Cæsar? There is a prior question: Had Cæsar any right to have his name and image on Jewish coins? The Jews had no images on their own coins. The very existence of a human head, especially a foreign and heathen head, on a coin for Jewish use was sacrilege. But this was only one of many symbols of Roman domination. To accept the domination itself while boggling at one of its symbols was simply another exhibition of the Pharisaic predilection for straining out a gnat while swallowing a camel. Whatever Jesus thought of the political situation, the policy of resistance by pin-pricks would not appeal to Him.

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All this was on the surface ; and that the Pharisees took a purely superficial view of the subject was evident from the form of their question: Is it allowed?—allowed, that is, by the written law or by tradition ; is it “ the proper thing ” ? Jesus indicates here, as He has already suggested in His teaching on marriage, that the solution of life's biggest problems is not found in any book, but in the heart of man illumined by the Spirit of God

The history of the Jewish people had been one long attempt to combine Church and state. The attempt had failed in various ways. The whole conception of law in the state is fundamentally different from the conception of law in the Church. The state is concerned with acts, not with character ; with praiseworthy conduct, not with right feeling ; with ceremonial, not with religion. The state can enforce its laws ; the sphere of the Church is the things of the spirit where God alone can effectively judge and control. The state deals with many matters which are outside the purview of the Church ; and the Church dwells much in regions where the state has no jurisdiction.

But the decisive reason why a Church state is foredoomed to failure is given in the parable of the Unscrupulous Factor.¹ The question in that story is whether the factor is a harbour-light to beckon us or a beacon to warn us off. There is no need to discuss the question whether Jesus with His courage and disregard of the proprieties would have held up

¹ Luke 16^{ff.}

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for our imitation a bad man in respect of some virtue which he happened to have. He who compared the coming of the Son of Man to the stealthy approach of a house-breaker¹ might not have shrunk from commending the virtues of a scoundrel. The point is that He does not seem ever to have done so. The judge who was influenced by no consideration, human or divine, except his own comfort,² and the disobliging man who lent three loaves to a friend at midnight only to save himself trouble,³ are not compared to but contrasted with God, who is more ready to hear His children's cry than they are to cry.

We are confirmed in this conclusion if we ask what lesson is drawn from the parable by men who believe Jesus praised the unscrupulous factor. Dr. Bruce,⁴ for example, explains the story as meaning that our riches, and even riches acquired unjustly, should be used in doing kindnesses to the poor; thus winning the favour of God and lightening our lot in the future world. In other words we acquire wealth by fair means or foul, and then use it to pay premiums to insure us against uncomfortable consequences hereafter. Surely Jesus did not mean that. "He that sacrificeth a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is made in mockery, and the mockeries of wicked men are not well-pleasing."⁵

¹ Matt. 2443.

² Luke 18¹.

³ Luke 11⁸.

⁴ *Expositor's Greek Testament* p. 586. Dr. Bruce however stipulates that we must not *continue* to acquire wealth dishonestly and then use it in philanthropy.

⁵ Ecclesiasticus 34¹⁸. Quoted in *The Social Teaching of the Bible*, p. 142.

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At the end of the parable Jesus goes on to speak about faithfulness and dishonesty in discharge of trusts ; and it is only reasonable to suppose that that is the subject of the parable. To make temporary provision for himself while he is looking for another situation, the factor reduces the landlord's claims on the tenants, and thus makes things comfortable for himself at his master's expense. In sorrowful irony Jesus says to His hearers : " Imitate the unscrupulous factor ! Take your ill-gotten gains and use them to make friends for yourselves ; so that when you die they may receive you into the eternal tents." The tricks of the worldling may succeed in the sphere of the worldling ; the children of the light must find their models elsewhere.

Lowering the Master's claims ! That is what the state not only does but must do. The state must always act in view of " the hardness " of men's hearts. No state in the world to-day would even dream of trying to enforce legislation based on Jesus' conception of womanhood and of sexual virtue. In dealing with liquor problems our own state at least is quite out of touch with Christian sentiment ; and no state in its treatment of what are called social questions can keep pace with the most Christianised portion of the community.

The state must listen to the claims of prudence as well as of righteousness ; must keep in mind, not only its members who are consciously seeking the Kingdom of God, but those whose deliberate aim is to prolong and extend the kingdom of Satan, and

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the very large number whose sympathies and efforts are divided between the two. Not "What one ought," but "Of what one ought, what one can," is the motto of the statesman. A whole state will often respond to a call from trusted leaders to rise above itself, and righteous legislation is in itself an effective instrument of education; yet the state as God's factor must pursue a policy of counting the cost, is compelled by the stern facts of life to take the Master's bills and write eighty or even fifty where the Master's claims are a hundred.

But in the Church there can be no counting of the cost: what is right is right though the heavens fall. The Church lowers her Master's claims at peril not only of her welfare but of her existence. And so Jesus founded a new community, bound only by the spiritual bond of allegiance to Himself; a Kingdom which was not of this world,¹ which has freed itself from the externalities and the demoralising compromises of the state.

The members of this Kingdom are also members of the family, the state, and other communities. It depends entirely on these visible communities how far membership in the Kingdom is compatible with membership in them. A family may try to turn the Messiah from His vocation. A Church state may combine with a civil state to crucify the King of the spiritual state. In all such cases the relation of the citizens of the spiritual kingdom to the visible communities is uncompromising opposition.

¹ John 18:36.

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But the Kingdom of God is like leaven.¹ As the Kingdom's principle of spiritual gravitation becomes more and more widely recognised and accepted, antipathy between the visible and the invisible community diminishes until at last the Christian may find his membership of a family, not a temptation but a source of strength and inspiration. It may even become possible to speak of a Christian state; but such phrases are loose and dangerous. Whether the leaven will ever work so effectively as to give us in some corner of the earth a state which whole-heartedly seeks the will of Jesus, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, we do not know. We do know that no such state exists now or ever has existed in the past.

The Government of our most Christian states is a compromise with a more or less effectively suppressed paganism. So long as this is so, to speak of a Christian state is hurtful in two ways. It tends to obscure from us the real issue in the vexed question of the relation of Church and state. That a Christian Church should be in some measure controlled by a Christian state may seem to be at least a proposition worthy of debate. Whether the spiritual interests of a Christian Church should be in any degree at the mercy of a state which only holds together as it compromises with paganism is not a question for serious discussion. To make the Christian Church a function of the state does not make the state a Christian state.

¹ Matt. 13³³.

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Further there can be no question that the prestige of the Church in non-Christian lands suffers seriously from the assumption that all the social and moral phenomena of Western lands are compatible with control by a "Christian state."

Jesus' view, then, is that the experiment of the Church state in which the things of God are also the things of the state has been tried and has failed ; the things of God have inevitably suffered. Henceforward, two spheres must be recognised : the spiritual Kingdom and the earthly. There is no inevitable inconsistency between them, and in the ideal state the Christian would be a loyal member of both communities. But in the communities of actual life, there will often be a clash of feeling, or incompatibility of demands for action. The things of Cæsar must yield to the things of God.

The work of the Church in the state, then, is to seek so to transform the state that in it life as Jesus conceives it may be lived. We have to widen our conception of Christian work. It is still a living issue whether the Church should confine herself to purely "spiritual" activities ; whether her only part in the work of governing the state is to imbue with Christian motives and ideals the men and women in whose hands the government lies, or whether she is called on to be a discerner of spirits, to label as Christian or unchristian aspects of our social and political systems and the various proposals for their reformation.

Questions of policemen's uniform and the colour of

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our postage stamps may be safely left to the children of this world. The Church can worthily deal only with questions that are worthy of her. She enters the political sphere, not to degrade herself, but to raise to the level of great moral and spiritual issues questions that concern the life of the people. In his ninth chapter Luke tells us that when the crowd followed Jesus and His disciples to Bethsaida, Jesus began to speak to them about the Kingdom of God ; but He did not stop there. He cured those among them who needed medical attention and when they were all hungry He fed them.

In its Foreign Mission enterprise the Church has been instinctively led to adopt the same principle. The only limits we set to the activities of the Church in non-Christian countries are the needs of the people and our own resources. The claims on the Church differ in different countries, in different circumstances, in different ages ; but in all ages the Church which is following in the footsteps of the Master will be found wherever there are enemies of the Kingdom to be rooted out, be they physical, mental, social, or political.

There are multitudes of our people living in houses that give the lie to the Christian doctrine of man. Every year we offer a holocaust of child life to smoke and grime and hunger and ignorance and drink and ground rents. Thousands of men are battenning on the vice, the degradation, the misery of their neighbours. A Church which could look on all this and find nothing to say but pious platitudes or

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vague generalities might have a Gospel to preach : it would not be the Gospel of Jesus.

We sometimes complain that the world will not listen to our message ; but the world has a sharp ear for false notes. The " sinners " of our day may not always have a high standard for themselves ; they always have a very high standard for those who claim to speak in the name of Jesus. If men cannot square the creed we live with the Jesus of Gospel story, they turn away. A Church whose Gospel is primarily a Gospel for the poor, which finds its vocation not among the healthy but among the sick, which can make the lame walk and the blind see, a Church which spends itself in driving out evil spirits, which speaks with the conviction of Jesus and the apostles and is willing like them to pay the price of conviction, is a Church to which men will listen.

Wherever men or women are casting out devils in the name of Jesus, there are our brothers and our sisters. The school teacher, the sanitary inspector, the trade union secretary, the novelist, the employer, the landholder, the clergyman, the Cabinet minister, there is but one question the Church can ask of each : Is it their aim so to transform the state that the Christian life will be a possibility for every citizen, to realise for all Jesus' ideal of physical soundness and mental sanity, to make the house a Christian home, to invite the denizens of city lanes and country by-ways to partake freely of the rich feast of things material, intellectual, and spiritual, that God is daily providing in ever greater abundance.

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If Jesus separated between the things of Cæsar and the things of God, it was only that the Church might more effectively mould the life of the state. In large measure the state makes us: the Church must make the state. It is in the state our Christian lives have to be lived: we must Christianise the state. Until we can stand before the members of our community, before all of them, knowing what they are and the lives they have to live, and say without conscious irony "My brother" and "My sister," there is work for the Church to do in the state.

CHAPTER XXIII

Who Veileth his Eyes

IN the New Testament record there is no sphere in which devotion to Jesus shows itself earlier or more effectively than the economic, no sphere in which the sincerity of the devotion is more severely tested. Economic questions, and not least money questions, have largely changed their form since Biblical times. Along with the vast increase of material wealth there has been a corresponding development in the forms and functions of the money which represents wealth. Not only are the avenues to wealth far broader and more easily trodden than in ancient times, but the power given by wealth is far more varied.

In our day every man with money is to that extent a king. The products of all men's labour, the services of all men's hands and brains, are freely at his disposal. He who has acquired wealth in its modern form of money does not require to use his wealth ; it is enough to let other people make use of it. Then he sits down on his throne and waits till the workers of the world come and fling their gifts at his feet. The modern wealthy man has solved the problem of how to spend without becoming poorer.

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" He is like to a tree
Planted by runlets of water,
Yielding its fruit in due season,
With leafage that fadeth never."¹

He eats each year the fruit of that year but his tree remains. In the Gospels the aspect of money most emphasised is its power to divert us from the pursuit of the ideal; under modern conditions its seductive influence is greater than ever.

Perhaps the most prominent feature in the attitude to money of Jesus and the apostles is their splendid indifference to it. As we read the story it is only an occasional reference such as that directing the twelve to make no pecuniary provision for their journey² that reminds us there were economic questions involved in the sacred ministry. We never see Jesus handling a coin except as a text, and in that case he has to ask a loan of one.³ The only piece of work for which any member of the apostle circle received a money payment was the betrayal by Judas of his Master.⁴

Nothing withers the influence of the professional religionist or philanthropist more certainly than the suspicion that his good works involve him in a larger bill for income-tax than he would have in any other occupation. Jesus displayed His usual knowledge of human nature when He kept Himself and His followers free from any pecuniary entanglement with those they tried to influence. "Silver and gold have I none,"⁵ was neither a proud boast nor a

¹ Ps. 13. ² Matt. 10⁹. ³ Mark 12¹⁵. ⁴ Mark 14¹¹. ⁵ Acts 3⁶.

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shame-faced confession, but a statement of policy. The very thought of a possible money payment for the miracles or the teaching of Jesus shocks us; and apparently the people whom Jesus taught and healed felt the incompatibility as instinctively as we do.

In the anointing at Bethany it was neither Jesus nor the apostles that marred the fragrance of the ointment by estimating the cost.¹

We are living in a world where money and all that money stands for are indispensable at every turn; but Jesus and His immediate followers moved on a level where the thought of money is an intrusion. This indifference to money was characteristic of Jesus' attitude to the whole of the material side of life. Whether as a rule He and the apostles fared well or ill on their journeys we do not know. The Gospel writers were not interested in the question, and apparently the men of whom they wrote were not interested; they had bigger things to think about. The Christian evangelist does not go "from house to house"² in search of more hospitable entertainment. But this indifference is simply forgetfulness under the pressure of higher interests. It is poles apart from the ascetic's concentration on and fear of life's good things.

Jesus has shown once for all that a life supremely great may also be supremely simple. Yet His simplicity was the simplicity not of the desert but of the village or even of the city. His work depended

¹ Mark 145.

² Luke 107.

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on the hospitality of women who were well-to-do, it may be in some cases wealthy.¹ There is no indication that Jesus resented or failed to appreciate the treasures of wealth, and beauty, and loving service, that had been lavished on the Temple. His final ideal is always the full life for all, though this may involve the empty life or the maimed life for many.

Jesus takes us to the heart of the question in the story of the Rich Fool.² The fields of a wealthy farmer or land-owner had borne bigger crops than usual, so that there was a surplus. The problem was then: how to dispose of the surplus. All advancement in refinement in art or science or literature, we might almost say all progress in character and the spiritual life, are conditional on the possession of something "over and above" the means of satisfying our purely animal wants, on successful emergence from the primitive struggle for food and shelter and clothing. The way in which individuals, classes, or nations, use the surplus is a revelation of what they are, and a stepping-stone to what they are to be.

The story of the Rich Fool is Jesus' answer to the question: What *not* to do with the surplus. Many of the tragedies of the Gospels are tragedies of thoughtlessness; but this fool is a calculating fool. He holds a full-dress debate with himself: "What am I to do, for I don't know where to put all my crops?" The man has not sufficient imagination

¹ Luke 8^{2 f.}

² Luke 12^{16ff.}

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to realise that anyone besides himself may be entitled to a share. The abounding fertility of his fields was a gift of God : in disposing of the fruits God was not in all his thoughts. Labourers had co-operated with him in producing the crops : they were not to co-operate with him in dividing them ; not at least beyond their bargain. Does not the law say the produce is his ?

Even if he is to make a purely selfish use of his wealth, there is an unselfish kind of selfishness which by raising the whole tone of one's life reverberates for good among one's neighbours. But this farmer is one of those whose sole criterion of the value of a thing is what it will fetch at an auction ; and beauty and truth are difficult to inventory.

His wealth was a positive embarrassment to him ; and as the result of his excogitations, he reaches this priceless gem of thought : " If your granaries are no longer big enough to hold all your corn, pull them down and build bigger granaries." We are entitled to laugh at him, if we are sure we have never measured a man by the size of his house. Some have been convinced that size is God's measure of value, and have found it difficult to believe the Christian Gospel because the earth on which the drama is played makes relatively to the material universe so small a stage.

The rich fool thought only of himself, and only of one aspect of himself, his body. In a world where we need God and need each other all the time, he aspired to be independent, independent of God and of

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man and of life's vicissitudes. He played for safety, the safety of his food and drink and merry-making. He had insured his income "for many years." He had no love for work ; the moment his future seemed secure he retired. In a working world he treated life as a perpetual holiday ; in a transient world he shaped his course as if he were immortal. His choice leads first to a work of destruction : he proposes to pull down his granaries which were large enough for his needs ; and secondly to waste ; he will squander men's time and labour and much material in building large new granaries that will typify his ideal.

Jesus saw deeper into life than the old psalmists and prophets, but He shares their conviction that life always pays back. The factors in life the farmer had forgotten refused to be forgotten. He had crowded God out of his life ; but God with tragic suddenness enters it. When God speaks, it is about the rich man's soul : " Fool, this very night your *soul* they demand from you." Till that moment he had forgotten that he had a soul. "*They* demand." *Who* demand ? Unknown people or spirits demand his soul from a man who had refused to acknowledge that either people or spirits had any relation to him except to feed and amuse him.

He had magnified his body and even mistaken it for himself ; now he has no further use for it. And the crowning irony is that he is compelled in spite of himself to be a public benefactor ; his stored-up wealth passes to others. He had chosen not to

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work; he is no longer allowed to work. He had forgotten eternity; eternity thrusts itself on him.

The story reminds us of other men who made shipwreck of their lives because they had something to spare: the boors who refused the invitation to the Great Supper.¹ They were not bad men as the world counts badness. They were all well-to-do men extending their responsibilities. All three had an engrossing preoccupation. They were not hungry; hence the great refusal. The supper of the Kingdom is for those who have an appetite for it. The one thing in common among the guests who ultimately filled the supper-table was hunger.

Yet the Gospel records themselves remind us that the desire for wealth is not the simple phenomenon we sometimes think it. It is as complex as life itself. A man or woman may seek wealth to gratify lust or to build a synagogue, to live a life of self-indulgent ease or to anoint the Saviour, to gratify vanity and love of power or to be able to offer hospitality to the saints of God, to purchase service or to have leisure and means to feed the hungry, befriend the sick, the prisoner, and the homeless. Some men pursue wealth in the same spirit as the hunter scours the African jungle. It is a matter of statistical fact that one of the most powerful of all motives for gaining or saving money is the desire to leave a competence to one's wife and family.

Nor must we too readily assume that poverty, either in fact or in the teaching of Jesus, is in itself

¹ Luke 14^{16ff.}

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conducive to spiritual health. Jesus was at pains to comfort the poor, who were in sore need of comfort, hemmed in and down-trodden as they were, despised by others and in danger of despising themselves, excluded even from the possibility of obeying what they were taught was God's Law. Poverty brings its own temptations, the temptation to sordidness, dishonesty, selfishness, even cruelty. "Give us to-day our bread for the morrow"¹ is vitally connected with "Lead us not into temptation."² Jesus was hungry when His first temptation came to Him.³ If we are not to worry about life's necessities, it is only because our Father knows all about them.⁴

One of poverty's chief dangers is the temptation to become a receiver, always a receiver, Jesus welcomed with glad praise the sturdy independence of the widow who would not let her abject poverty shut her out of the joy of giving.⁵ In life and in death Jesus was indebted to the service of the wealthy and the well-to-do: the family at Bethany,⁶ the woman who anointed Him,⁷ the women who made the domestic arrangements for the apostle circle,⁸ Joseph of Arimathea,⁹ and Nicodemus.¹⁰ Yet Jesus denounced woe to the rich¹¹ and consistently dwelt on riches as a source of temptation. And we cannot help asking; Is this justified by the facts of life?

¹ Matt. 6¹¹. Dr. Moffatt's translation.

² Matt. 6¹³.

³ Matt. 4².

⁴ Matt. 6³².

⁵ Mark 124^{1ff}.

⁶ Luke 10³⁸.

⁷ Mark 143^{ff}.

⁸ Luke 8^{2ff}.

⁹ Matt. 2757^{ff}.

¹⁰ John 1939.

¹¹ Luke 6²⁴.

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Those who know how hard and cruel the world can be to the poor, who have seen the bitter struggles of women and children left without their natural protectors, those who have tried to take any part in the work of uplifting men and been handicapped at every turn by want of material resources, inevitably ask : Does not Jesus exaggerate one aspect of riches and the search for riches to the exclusion of many other aspects which they equally possess ? This would be quite in accordance with His method of teaching.

We have seen how as the environment becomes progressively Christianised, many of the hardest sayings of Jesus gradually lose their point. The cleavage between the claims of Jesus and the claims of family, between the things of God and the things of Cæsar, becomes less and less acute, till a Christian in the West to-day may go through the whole of his life without ever once having to make a conscious choice ; and the sayings of Jesus on these subjects seem like echoes from a distant and foreign past, not as they often still are in heathen countries, voices from the living present.

A Christian conscience is being gradually and even rapidly developed on the subjects both of poverty and wealth. As the spirit of Jesus gradually prevails poverty will be shorn of much of its terror, and wealth we may presume will lose much of its attractiveness. May we not even contemplate a time, perhaps in the not distant future, when the mere possession of great riches will be considered as

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indecent as the vulgar display of them is now? Yet, provided we remember that Jesus had no interest in giving an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but that His paramount concern was to warn us of the dangers involved in the possession and the pursuit of wealth, every word He uttered is as valid for us as for the original audiences.

Of the pitfalls into which riches or the search for them may lead us, Jesus dwells specially on two, both illustrated in the story of the crestfallen young ruler.¹ The economist distinguishes between internal and external wealth, and in this he is simply following the guidance of Jesus. Jesus always urged men to distinguish between the wealth which becomes a part of us, and the wealth which must remain for ever outside of us, which can decay or be stolen, and is left behind us when we die. The affection of our friends, the gratitude of those we have helped, the temptation resisted that has raised our whole life to a higher plane, these things are of the essential wealth that abides. Land, houses, and bank accounts are detachable; and only when we are asked to detach them do we realise the grip they have of us.

Turning over the pages of the Gospels reminds us of the consulting room of a famous physician. As the patients pass one after the other into the presence of the great man, one who had looked in casually on account of what he thought a slight ailment receives his death sentence; and another who thought he

¹ Mark 10^{17th}.

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was the victim of a fatal disease is relieved to find he is suffering from some common and trifling malady. If we have ever really come into contact with Jesus, we have once in a life-time seen ourselves as we are. Our Lord did not judge the rich young ruler ; He said not a word about his character ; but He had given him a lamp by the light of which he could judge himself.

The demand that Jesus made from the ruler must have seemed to him an impossible, not to say absurd, demand. He was neither a sensualist nor an unkindly landlord. His wealth gave him time and opportunity to attend to the claims of religion. How could making himself a beggar increase his fitness for the Kingdom ? Jesus saw that with his earnestness, his blameless past, and his training, he would make a welcome addition to the disciple circle. If He had in the main chosen comparatively uneducated men as His apostles, it was not because they were uneducated ; and for all their receptiveness they were often dull and wayward pupils. What a Gospel the rich ruler might have written had he ceased to be the rich ruler and followed Jesus ! Just as Levi was a centre for the movement among the tax-gatherers and the two pairs of brothers for the mission to the peasants and fishermen of Galilee, so this young man might have opened up the way for a ministry among the educated and the wealthy, whom we cannot but suppose Jesus wanted to win.

Why did Jesus make it a condition that he should renounce his wealth ? We may dismiss the idea that

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our Lord made this demand simply because it was the most painful thing He could ask the ruler to do, In the Middle Ages the so-called saints treated their followers in this way¹: we have missed much in the teaching of Jesus if we can imagine Him playing with the pain of an earnest man hesitating between the choice of life and death. Jesus again cannot have meant that the possession of the estate was in itself sinful; otherwise it would have been wrong to sell it to another owner. Nor can Jesus mean that no wealthy man can enter the Kingdom. Zacchæus in addition to making generous restitution of his ill-gotten gains gave only half his wealth to the poor, and he was warmly welcomed as a disciple.²

It is clear that a rich man in the apostle circle, however earnest, might have been more of a hindrance than a help. A large part of Jesus' ministry was a Gospel of hope and comfort for the poor; but wealthy men do not carry conviction when they preach hope and comfort to the poor; nor is this the only subject on which their mouths are closed. A man with an estate to attend to could have given only half his mind to his work as a pupil of Jesus; Jesus wanted undistracted service. Had there been in the apostle circle a man with an unlimited supply of loaves and fishes, the multitudes would soon have learned to come for a share; and whether the rich man had given or refused to give, the result would have been equally disastrous to the spiritual ministry. It may well be too that Jesus saw his

¹ See Black, "Culture and Restraint," p. 265.

² Luke 19^{8f}.

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soul was being strangled by pride and trust in his wealth and position.

How far is Jesus' hard saying to the rich ruler applicable to all candidates for discipleship? It is one of the paradoxes of Christianity that our willingness to part from our material resources for Jesus' sake measures the degree in which we may safely keep them under our own control. Everyone who has ever been a guest in a wealthy and refined home, where the whole atmosphere was fragrant with the spirit of Christian love and service, must have had the gravest doubt whether the master or mistress of the home would have been helping the world by handing over their wealth to any charity, however wisely administered; may we not even say, would have felt quite certain that this would have been a misuse of their wealth? The difficulty is that so few accept in its entirety Jesus' teaching that we are only stewards of our possessions. Wealthy people in the Gospels always appear as giving or expected to give; no function of wealth is recognised but its power to lighten the lot of others.

Contrast the story of the rich ruler with the story of the anointing by the woman who was "a sinner."¹ He was a man of piety; she was famous for the wickedness of her life. He had kept all the commandments: she had broken them all. He was admired and honoured by all, a welcome addition to any company: she was despised by all; her presence brought defilement, her touch pollution. Both came

¹ Luke 7³⁶ff.

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with enthusiasm to the feet of Jesus ; he left crest-fallen ; she left forgiven. He could not give up his wealth when asked : she unasked freely poured out of her treasure.

The second danger of riches on which Jesus dwells is only another aspect of the same. The stern realities amid which most men live are so screened off from the rich man, he lives in such a haze of conscious and unconscious flattery, deception, and self-deception, that it is all but impossible for him to see things or people as they are. Least of all can he see himself as he is.

The possession of wealth tends to close our eyes to the sufferings of the multitudes who have no wealth, to prejudice us in our enquiries into the causes of their poverty and our good fortune, and into any claims they may have on us. There is a Hebrew proverb :—

“ He that gives to the poor shall not come to want,
But who veileth his eyes shall have many a curse.”¹

There are various ways of veiling our eyes. We may live in the West End and assume that the poor man no longer exists because we do not see him. A not uncommon plan is the adoption of a system of theology which teaches that poverty is the result of vice and wealth the just reward of virtue, so that there is nothing to worry about. We may turn “The poor ye have always with you”² into a prophecy, and console ourselves with the reflection that in trying to preserve their poverty in all its

¹ Prov. 28:7

² Mark 14:7.

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unadorned simplicity we are fulfilling Scripture Statistics also, that "strong tower from the enemy,"¹ may be relied on to show how hopeless it is for one man to try to accomplish anything.

Nothing in the whole range of New Testament teaching on wealth is clearer than that any kind of living contact with Jesus invariably led to a new interest in the poor, a new understanding and recognition of their claims, a fresh outburst of liberality. It was the first subject on which the conscience of Zacchæus was touched.² When Jesus told the rich ruler to sell all and give to the poor,³ was He thinking only of the young man's soul? Was He not thinking also of the poor, wanting the ruler to think of the poor, whom with all his goodness he had contrived to forget? Dives always shut his eyes when he passed Lazarus, the eyes of his mind at least.⁴ Jesus wants us to go through life with our eyes open, and when we see a poor man to see in him a poor *man*. The controversy whether or no the first Christians adopted the principle of communism⁵ has little interest for us. The important point is that the Jerusalem Church felt instinctively that a community, in which some members were starving while others had more than enough, whatever else it might be, was not a Christian Church. For all our Christian giving or refusal to give, there is only one Christian principle, to remember that the eye of Jesus is on us as we pass the treasury.⁶

¹ Ps. 61^{3b}.

² Luke 19⁸.

³ Mark 10²¹.

⁴ Luke 16^{21, 25}.

⁵ Acts 244; 43^{2ff}.

⁶ Mark 124¹.

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Jesus knew poverty from the inside : yet His whole attitude to it was one of sympathy, comfort, encouragement. There are other things that require to be said to the poor and of the poor ; things that Jesus knew as well as any charity organiser can know ; but these things are an impertinence on the lips of any, save one whose whole life testifies that his essential attitude to poverty is the understanding, admiring, pitying sympathy of Jesus. Jesus put the rich and learned Pharisees in the pillory for all succeeding generations to scoff at : there is not a beggar in Gospel story that is not pictured in a kindly light. There were pious Pharisees and scoundrel beggars ; but Jesus knew where our short-sightedness requires the emphasis to be placed.

The history of the progress of the Gospel has been the story of the gradual opening of the eyes of the blind to see people who had been there all the time though we had not noticed them ; to see them with the eyes of Jesus : the Gentile world, the sick in body, the afflicted in mind, slaves, criminals, the " heathen," children. God's call to the Church to-day is to open our eyes to the poor : not so much to the abjectly poor ; we can hardly shut them out of our lives if we would.

The people to whom the rich and the comfortable classes have to reconsider their relation are not poor in the old sense at all. But they are miserably poor in this sense : that they are living in a world in which riches are multiplying as they never multiplied before ; it is their work in life to help to multiply

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them: but a flaming whirling sword guards every avenue to the Garden of Eden which is full in their view. Their faculties are trained to enjoy the good things of life as the faculties of their forefathers were not trained. The feast is spread before them and their appetites are whetted, but for the most part it is to a Barmecide banquet the world invites them.

It is not great wealth that revolts the Christian conscience, but great wealth side by side with great poverty; especially when the wealth is only accumulated at the expense of the poverty. The first Christians immediately realised that this was true in the Church. Only a little time was needed to convince them that it was hardly less true when the Christian compared himself with those outside the Church. "Let us work for the benefit of all, but especially of the family of the faith."¹

When we have said everything that can be said of the needs of the leaders of industry, and of those who are doing the intellectual work of the world; the importance to them of comfortable surroundings, freedom from pecuniary anxiety, plentiful service, books and pictures, foreign travel; when we have told our consciences that those who work with their hands have no need of these things; the sum and substance of it all is that the situation is impossible, impossible in a community that makes any claim to be guided by the principles of Jesus. To Christianise our social relations will involve not merely

¹ Gal. 6¹⁰.

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changes but vital changes, in our whole method of producing, distributing, and consuming wealth.

There is often more in our preaching than we ourselves are conscious of. Those to whom we proclaim the Gospel sometimes carry it out to logical inferences that had escaped ourselves. We have preached that life and the world are good ; that each man is of infinite significance, and that God is no respecter of persons ; and the world, even the world outside the Church, has taken us seriously, more seriously perhaps than some of us meant to be taken. A new movement has begun. The Church may stand aloof, or may oppose, or may throw herself into the new movement and seek to keep it on Christian lines. The attitude of the Church will help to shape her own destiny as well as the destiny of the world. It is always well to ask ourselves, whether there is anything in our own social position, or in the means by which the Church obtains the material requisites of her work, that will tend to warp our judgment on social and industrial problems.

CHAPTER XXIV

Four Attitudes to the Brother

IN the parable of the Good Samaritan,¹ a story which is the final answer to the question why He taught the people in parables, Jesus has given us His Social Gospel. It is not only a lesson in philanthropy; Jesus goes further and asks why philanthropy is necessary. He portrays the four attitudes to our fellow-men: the robbers who create the problem, the priest and the Levite who ignore it, the inn-keeper who treats it professionally, and the Good Samaritan who solves it.

The robbers are typical of a class of people who in presence of a fellow-creature have but one question to ask: What can I get out of this man? To use the language of the socialist, to them a neighbour is a person to be exploited. These robbers in our day are a large and flourishing class. Among them we recognise the employer, who whatever the rate of profits may be has only one rule of wages, the least he can get men to work for: the landlord who regards his tenants simply as rent-payers; shareholders whose one aim is dividends and who are not at all curious how these dividends are obtained; workmen

¹ Luke 10:30ff.

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whose motto is the largest possible amount of pay for the smallest possible amount of work ; drink-sellers who are as tender of the weak brother as the apostle Paul, since the weaker the brother, the bigger their profits.

This spirit which makes human beings into economic beasts of prey, with flesh and blood like themselves as the victims, if not the whole root of the trouble, is responsible for a sufficient quantity of it to warrant Jesus in singling it out as He did. Nor is it only in our economic lives we exploit each other. The pleasures we esteem so lightly are often obtained at the expense of more deadly injury to our brother or our sister than robbing them of their goods.

It is a true instinct that makes Jesus represent the robbers as beating the traveller as well as robbing him. Presumably it was only his belongings they wanted ; but in order to get them, they had to disable him. When we set out on any course of selfishness we never quite see where it will lead us to. All we can be sure of is that it will lead us further than we want to go. People who do cruel things are often far more cruel than they mean to be, or are conscious of being. Having stripped the traveller and half killed him, the robbers "went off and left him." Since there was nothing more to be got from him, they recognised no further relation to him. He passed out of their lives ; at least they thought so.

Here then we have the "social problem," in all its pain and ugliness. To label it is to be half recon-

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ciled to it. Jesus has shown us how the difficulty arises. Next He shows us how not to solve it. The prescription of the priest and the Levite for dealing with the robbed and half-dead traveller is the simplest ever proposed. They simply turn their eyes away. To them for all practical purposes the traveller no longer exists. The charge that the Church ignores the man who is down is one with which, whether just or unjust, we in our day are familiar.

We lose the point if we think of the priest and the Levite as being bad men ; still more if we regard them as cruel men. They were conventional men, who no doubt discharged quite worthily the duties of their profession and their station according to their light and the expectations of the circle to which they belonged. They could have passed a searching examination in the Old Testament Scriptures, or at least in those portions of them which interested priests. They were experts on the Temple ritual, and could keep anxious enquirers straight on any point connected with the sacrifices. They could have told the precise significance of every detail of the priestly and levitical robes, and shown the importance of preserving these details in their pristine purity from age to age. But they would not shock society by being good in unconventional ways. A half-naked unconscious man, covered with blood, lying by the side of the road, was outside of their routine. They thought it best to go on.

It was no accident that the method of dealing with the wounded traveller by ignoring him was ascribed

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by Jesus to two typical ritualists. It is in accordance with His whole attitude to the ceremonialists of the time. No one who knows anything of the high-ways and by-ways of Christian service to-day would suggest for a moment that devotion to the external accompaniments of worship is incompatible with the spirit that seeks out and tries to save at whatever cost the unloveliest of our fellow-creatures. Yet Jesus distinctly teaches that in His experience the two are antagonistic. Was this true only of the ritualism of His own day, or is it in the very nature of all materialising of worship to concentrate attention on sacrifice rather than on mercy?

The disciples of the priest and the Levite still abound among us. They solved the problem of slavery by telling us that black people have not feelings like white people, and that the negroes were much happier as slaves than they would be as free men. If poor people, they tell us, got higher wages, they would only spend them in drink. City garrets are a painful subject; but that kind of people would turn a palace into a slum. Beggars are not "the seed of the righteous," which settles their problem. It is distressing to see so many people outside of the Church; but the obvious reason is that our Church preaches too high and pure a Gospel for these worldlings.

In Eastern lands when pestilence is claiming its victims by the hundred thousand and some are finding it hard to preach the love of God, our priests and Levites are not at all perplexed. The statistics,

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they tell us, are unreliable ; or the remedy tried last time was unsuccessful ; or the victims are surplus population who can well be dispensed with. Missions to " the heathen " are an expensive impertinence ; since by an inscrutable decree of a wise Providence, every nation already has the religion best suited to it. But when we have passed him by on the other side the wounded traveller remains, his blood unstaunched, his wounds unhealed, his cry for help all the more poignant that it is often mute.

It is significant that the scene took place on a lonely road. The priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, had no spectators but God. Each showed himself as he was, without the stimulus or the reproach of public opinion.

The Samaritan who comes to the rescue is a busy man ; he cannot give up the whole of his time to the traveller, but has to call in the help of the inn-keeper. It is one of the extraordinarily modern touches in the story that the problem is finally solved by a combination of the amateur and the professional philanthropist, each making the contribution that he can make best. The Samaritan renders first aid, supplies the funds, makes all the arrangements, and is the inspiration of the whole story of the rescue.

Moreover he superintends the work of the professional ; for when he leaves the inn, he promises to come back again : and the innkeeper knows that so thorough a person will want to know how his ward has been looked after in his absence. But there is medical work to be done, a course of nursing to be

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undertaken, for which the Samaritan has neither the time, nor, it may be, the ability.

That the inn-keeper is a professional is not intended as a point against him.. Like any other workman he is worthy of his wages. The Samaritan trusts him and presumably his trust is well founded. If the Samaritan is to carry out his kindly project, the help of the inn-keeper is indispensable. And yet, the hero of the story is not the inn-keeper but the Samaritan.

An inn-keeper may be himself a Good Samaritan ; though he earns his living by keeping the inn, he may tend the wounded travellers brought to him as carefully and lovingly as any amateur philanthropist. Yet every one who has any acquaintance with the working of public institutions at home or abroad knows that when the administration of kindness is left to paid agents, there is no certainty that the work is being carried out in the spirit of the Good Samaritan. It is not enough to strike a bargain with the inn-keeper. There is need for the Samaritan whose great heart of love has set in motion the whole system to come back again to the inn, to see that his generous purpose is not being frustrated by hired service, to try to inspire the inn-keeper with something of his own self-sacrificing devotion.

To the robbers the traveller was a victim to be exploited ; to the priest and the Levite a nuisance to be evaded ; to the inn-keeper he was a business proposition ; to the Samaritan he was a neighbour to be helped. The kindness of most of us has its

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strict limitations. Jesus is emphatic that the wounded traveller will never be restored to his place in society by men who are always asking whether they have not done enough. The Samaritan did not stop till he had done *everything* that the situation called for.

He used his skill: he took trouble; he gave his time: he risked his life; he exercised thought and forethought on the sick man's behalf. When he left the traveller, he left him in good hands. He paid all expenses; yet there was no extravagance. He gave what he thought was necessary, but promised to make good any deficit. He promised to come back and see his ward. The Samaritan was not doing good to relieve an uneasy conscience; his only thought was to help the traveller and to help him all he could.

Why did the priest and the Levite fail? We do not know. No doubt they had some excellent excuse; but the best excuse in the world for neglecting a duty is never just the same as doing it. They failed because some selfish interest of their own would have suffered had they stopped to tend the traveller. The Samaritan succeeded because he did not think of himself at all. To him the traveller was not "the social problem," but a fellow creature in distress. He was "moved with compassion." That made all the difference.

The story illustrates among other things the hollowness of the distinction we sometimes draw between spiritual work and social work. Was the

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Samaritan a Christian missionary or a social reformer? Who can tell, and who can tell what either of the phrases means in such a connection?

It is significant that the scene is not laid on a battle-field or in a plague-stricken town. It is a story of one victim of oppression on a lonely road. If we are ever to help those who have gone under we must help them one by one, as men, not as "cases." And the Samaritan was not out looking for adventures. The incident happened in the course of his day's work. But he was bearing his cross, and was ready for the call when it came.

Like all the other parables of Jesus this story is not a compendium either of theology or of ethics. It leaves many questions unanswered, questions even which naturally arise out of the story. Jesus was an artist, and He was not so much afraid for the Ark as many of His followers. His teaching is always for those who have ears to hear. As for the others, let them grow ears.

The Samaritan's work is not finished till he has dealt with the robbers, who in the meantime are robbing and assaulting other travellers; but that is another story. The priest and the Levite are not explained nor is any comment made on them. They appear for a moment; then pass on for ever, leaving behind them the grim sense of irrevocable choice made.

We want to know why the Good Samaritan did what he did. What was his motive? It is characteristic that no word is said of this. There is no appeal to brotherhood or the common Fatherhood

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of God. And Jesus was right. If one is not moved, by the mere recital of what he did, with all his heart to go and do likewise, any "motive" with which theology might supply him would leave him cold.

For practical guidance we are particularly anxious to know what became of the wounded traveller when he recovered. Was the work of the Samaritan simply palliative and superficial; or did he go to the root of things and try not merely to patch up the traveller but to make him a new man? His work is unfinished till the traveller himself becomes a Samaritan. Even in His miracles Jesus never worked entirely from the outside. The patient must at least be receptive; and either the patient or his friends must co-operate with that response of the whole nature which the Gospels call faith. This we can say: that every act, gesture, tone, and look of the Samaritan bore witness to the love of God. The traveller has come within the range of the most powerful of all preaching. Henceforth the responsibility is his.

One more question of primary importance for our present social organisation is suggested by the story, though for light on it we must turn rather to the whole trend of the teaching of Jesus. The Good Samaritan had some command of money. How he acquired that money is irrelevant to the story. But it is not irrelevant to ask whether in earning or gaining the money he exhibited the same spirit as he exhibited in spending it. Generally speaking the theory that underlies our present system is that in

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our business lives we are bound by considerations of honesty, justice, and fair play; and only after our income is actually in our pocket can we afford to listen to the claims, supposed to be of a loftier and more or less optional morality, of generosity and kindness. Does the story leave it possible for us to imagine that the Samaritan's goodness deserted him when he donned his office coat?

Of all the varied influences that lead men to work, it is usually assumed that desire for money so preponderates that we do not go far astray if we neglect all others in our calculations. In the parable of The Hours¹ it was an axiom to the labourers that the only conceivable result of more work was more pay. Even in the most Christian countries that is still the general point of view, so far as the earning side of our lives is concerned.

The tradition that more and better work can only be evoked by offers of higher remuneration is so firmly established that it may seem at times as if nothing could shake it. But after all it is only a tradition; and very little knowledge of history is needed to convince us that the most firmly rooted traditions can be overthrown. Even men of the world to-day have a certain contempt for mere money-grubbing, naked and unashamed. One reason why our admiration for the heroism of our soldiers and sailors is so unalloyed is that their triumphs have so often no taint of commercialism.

One who has seen the men of our navy or our

¹ Matt. 20th.

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mercantile marine saving life at sea, knowing that their own lives were in jeopardy from moment to moment, yet going on with the work of rescue as calmly as if they were in harbour, must have realised keenly that a healthy tradition is even more powerful than desire for gain to supply altruistic motive. The late Dr. Smart of Glasgow University used to suggest that a time would come when the princes of manufacture and commerce would find their reward, not in profits and dividends, but in titles and blue ribbons. The idea is by no means so quixotic as it sounds, and it is only another step to imagine them dispensing even with the titles and orders. If the men whose profession is war work not for money but in a spirit of self-sacrificing heroism, it is surely not inconceivable that the men who follow peaceful pursuits might one day develop the same tradition. The Christian Church has already worked miracles in creating Good Samaritans who spend their substance in the spirit of Christian service ; its next task is to induce men to earn their incomes in the spirit of Christian service.

One may discount as in no small measure a travesty of the facts, much in the semi-economic literature of the day that represents our present system as a wild uncontrolled struggle for existence. We may also have the gravest doubts of the moral, even more than of the economic, effects of some of the Utopias that seek to supplant our present industrial organisation, and which on a superficial view are based on the principle of brotherhood. Even if we

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could believe that the sole driving power behind the Socialist movement were the very spirit of the Good Samaritan, we have still to consider what would happen when the initial impulse had spent itself. We have only to ask the question to realise why Jesus advocated no political or economic system. There are social, political, economic conditions, that make the Christian life difficult or impossible. But it is not enough to set our house in order. The house makes the inmates; but in an even greater degree the inmates make the house. Take care of the men, the women, and the children, and the systems will take care of themselves.

Whatever economic system we adopt, there are reproaches to be removed from nations whose sacred book contains the story of the Good Samaritan. We are living in a world where land and capital are essentials of existence. The vast majority of people in our country find themselves born into a system in which the entire land of the country is surrounded by barbed wire, and all the capital by boards warning off trespassers. The great bulk of our people live in hired houses on hired land, and earn their living by becoming hired labourers working with hired capital.

This is not only an economic question. It is a question of personality. Most of us are here only on sufferance. The whole attitude to us of the system in which we live is that of the priest and Levite when it is not that of the robber. We are treated as strangers in a strange land. We want to

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feel that we are here by right, that we too are Roman citizens. We claim to live in our own house, on our own ground ; to earn our living not by the grace of any man, but in our own right as citizens, in some business in which we can feel the magic of property, which, as Arthur Young said, turns sand into gold. We have too long been in bondage to a heathen legal system that magnified the rights of property. When our law is more fully Christianised, human life will have its rights too.

The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. The Jews thought this was a law of God. We now know it is in large measure an artificial arrangement of man. The Christian state can and must restrain the vicious results of heredity within their inevitable limits.

In the Christian state we shall suffer the little children to come to Jesus, not as we do so often now, by the pathway of a premature grave, but by a life environed in beauty and love and all things wholesome and clean. God's trees and flowers and birds and clear pure air and the face of the sky will be part of the birthright of all God's children. There are talents to be sought out and cultivated with skill and care. No country in the world is so rich in ability that it can afford to leave any single talent uncultivated for lack of money.

We are gradually learning the old, old lesson of Jesus that a bold scattering of the gifts of which God has made us stewards is the truest prudence. The

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nation like the man that recklessly, yet wisely, scatters its ten talents will reap an abundant reward. Slums and all that the slum stands for are too expensive luxuries for any nation to afford. Undeveloped capacities are an anachronism among a people that has got past the stage of hoarding its gold in the ground.

We have thrown ourselves with feverish energy into the work of developing our mineral resources, and in a less degree our agricultural resources; only slowly and reluctantly and half-convinced have we begun to develop our human resources. The belief that the wealth of a nation is the richness of the life of its citizens has been of slow growth. There is no room in the life of our nation for economic methods that produce goods, but do not produce men with sound body and brain and heart.

We cannot afford to have men or women in our country who are not at home in a decent house, and who cannot earn a decent wage. The only way to deal with unskilled and inefficient labour is to abolish it. We must educate and train and inspire and uplift. A Church which has caught Jesus' conception of the possibilities that are in men, which throws itself with passion and that faith which nothing can resist into the work of establishing neighbourly relations among men, is a Church that will do things.

In the Judgment scene at the end of Matthew xxv. the Judge does not ignore economic questions as the Church has at times been inclined to do. How have we disposed of our superfluous food, clothing,

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time and strength? That is not only a question, but the only question. It is one of the many extravagances of Jesus that experience justifies. And the story of the widow's mites reminds us that Jesus' conception of where our superfluous wealth begins may be very different from ours.

Love incarnate moves the heart as maxims cannot. The Church and the Church alone can hold before the minds of men in each succeeding generation Jesus the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Good Samaritan, Jesus the Elder Brother, crucified for men and risen.

The unknown future is not all unknown. Greed, and sensuality, and pride, and ambition, and indifference, and all unneighbourliness, will put forth all their strength against Jesus Risen as they tried to crush Him in the days of His flesh. But they have killed His body; there is no more that they can do to Him. He is here with power. Calvary is God's pathway to Pentecost. In the world's darkest hour, we believe in God; we believe also in Jesus, in whom and in whom alone, there is Life.

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